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LIVES IN THE WILDERNESS

Three Classic Indian Autobiographies

Jim Corbett, Verrier Elwin, and Sálim Ali

This volume comprises the autobiographical works of three men who had a special relationship with the Indian jungles—Jim Corbett, Verrier Elwin and Sálim Ali. It comes with an Introduction by Ramachandra Guha and will appeal to all those interested in literature, anthropology, cultural survival and the social history of modern India.

Jim Corbett, India's most famous hunter, was transformed by his love of the forest into a great conservationist. His books include *The Man-Eating Leopards of Rudraprayag*, *The Temple Tiger*, and *Jungle Lore*.

Verrier Elwin is one of the greatest scholars and champions of India's tribal peoples. He is the author of several books, including *Leaves from the Jungle*, *The Tribal Art of Middle India*, and *Tribal Myths of Orissa*.

Sálim Ali is India's most celebrated ornithologist. His prolific output includes *The Book of Indian Birds*, *Indian Hill Birds* and *The Handbook of the Birds of India and Pakistan, Vols 1-10* (with S. Dillon Ripley).

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—Ranjit Lal, *Indian Review of Books*

'What shines through their work is a love of natural beauty and cultural diversity.'

—*Indian Express*

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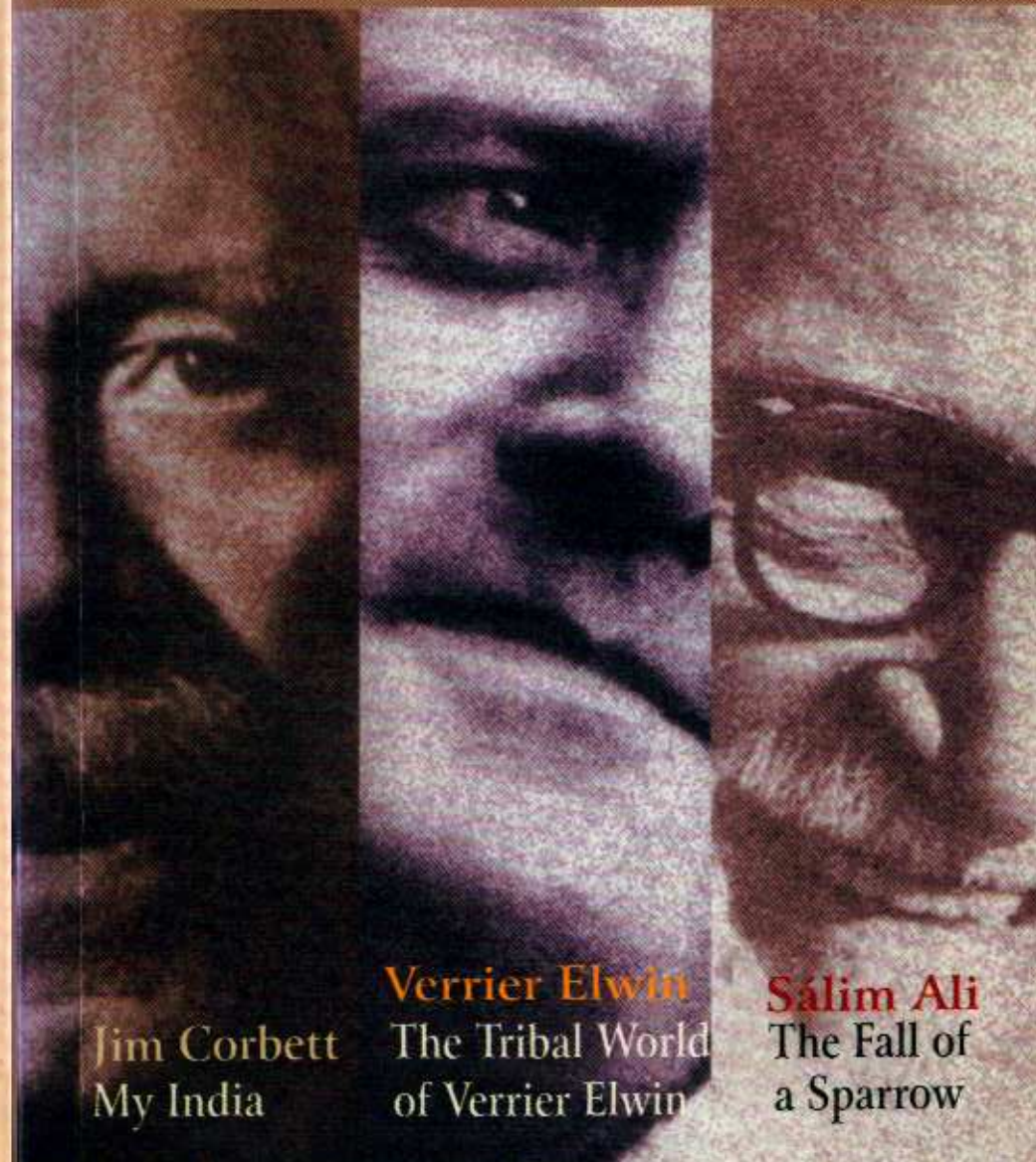
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Jim Corbett
My India

Verrier Elwin
*The Tribal World
of Verrier Elwin*

Sálim Ali
*The Fall of
a Sparrow*

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THREE CLASSIC INDIAN AUTOBIOGRAPHIES

My India

Jim Corbett

The Tribal World of Verrier Elwin

Verrier Elwin

The Fall of a Sparrow

Salim Ali

With an Introduction by

RAMACHANDRA GUHA

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Introduction

Ramachandra Guha

Indo-Anglian autobiography is dominated by the triumvirate of Mohandas Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, and Nirad Chaudhuri. The second was inspired by the first, the last provoked by the other two. Gandhi's experiments were first narrated in Gujarati, but it is the English version (translated by Mahadev Desai, and published almost simultaneously) that has made its mark down the ages. Nehru's autobiography was written as confirmation of his status as the likely successor to Gandhi as leader of the Indian freedom movement. Chaudhuri's autobiography was, among other things, a statement of defiance, its title a means to an ironic distancing from the books of those manifestly public and globally famous Indians.

All three works were written in middle age. Gandhi's appeared in book-form when he was fifty-nine, Nehru's when he was forty-seven, Chaudhuri's when he was fifty-four. The autobiographer had a substantial reservoir of experience to draw upon, and more to look forward to. The books are also united by a shared tone: a curious if characteristically Indian combination of the reflective and the pedagogic. Gandhi's book is aimed in the first instance at the middle class and uncertainly patriotic Indian, whereas Nehru's reach is more international. (*The Experiments with Truth* was originally serialized in the Mahatma's own journal, *Young India*, while *An Autobiography* was first published in London in 1936, to be read by the European torn between fascism and democratic socialism.) Gandhi's meditations are biased inwards, Nehru's

outwards. Yet consider how in both works the career of the individual is so inseparably interwoven with the career of Indian nationalism.

Nirad Chaudhuri has never acknowledged that his own book was written in the shadow of those by Gandhi and Nehru. His admirers will probably reject the suggestion on the grounds that his autobiography is intensely personal (politics enters more centrally in its long delayed sequel, *Thy Hand, Great Anarch!*). But the connections are not hard to make, or to sustain. A thinker detested by Chaudhuri, Karl Marx, once wrote that 'men make their own history, but not in the circumstances of their choosing'. This could well have served as an epitaph for *An Autobiography of an Unknown Indian*, a book which shows how an individual is shaped by history yet able to (partially) transcend it. In Chaudhuri, as indeed in Gandhi and Nehru, the hope is that the reader will be inspired and educated by the experiences, errors, judgements and actions of the autobiographer. But the teachings are addressed also to oneself. The autobiographer knows that he is not done with life yet. Might he not, in the years that remain, implement with more certainty the credo that he has so strenuously worked out?

Three books do not make a 'tradition'. One might, however, contrast these works with what I shall with more authority call the Western tradition of autobiography. The Western autobiographer does not have to wait till middle age to take up his pen. *A Precocious Autobiography* is the title of a book written in the 1960s by the Russian poet Yevgeny Yevtushenko. A few years later Dom Moraes (always European by sensibility and, at the time, also British by nationality) published his memoirs, *My Son's Father*. He too was less than thirty. Long before Yevtushenko and Moraes, Robert Graves had emerged from the trenches of the First World War to write his *Goodbye to All That*.

The arrogance of these accounts is affecting. Poets, it seems, know all about life as soon as they have fought their first war or divorced their first wife. At the other pole of the Western tradition are the memoirs written in the evening of life. These latecomers

are more likely to be scientific men, who turn to autobiography when their real work is done. Among the great works of this type are those written by Charles Darwin, Bertrand Russell and Benjamin Franklin.

Western autobiographies, whether precocious or ripe, tend to more closely scrutinize the self. They can be self-absorbed and simultaneously self-deprecatory. Society is generally kept at a safe distance. There is little effort to hand out lessons. By contrast, the Indian autobiographer is solemn. For all their worth, one cannot recall a witty remark or a joke well told in the autobiographies of Gandhi, Nehru and (it must be said) Chaudhuri.

II

To the trinity discussed above this Omnibus offers a lesser trinity of Indo-Anglian autobiographies. Lesser, but not necessarily less readable.

Let me take them in order of appearance. Jim Corbett's *My India* was published in 1952, when its author was seventy-seven. The book is not so much a conventional autobiography as a collection of incidents in the life of the great hunter, placed alongside portraits of men and women he knew. It was written as Corbett prepared to migrate to Kenya which, unlike India, was then still under British rule. Before he went he left behind, in print, fragments of the land he had loved. Beyond its literary purpose the book aims also to pre-empt the imminent nationalist erasure of all that the white man did in and especially for India. Of course *My India* has many heroes, and not all of them are white. But the presentation compels one to seek out, among them, the policeman Freddie Young, for his courage, humour and devotion to duty.

The Tribal World of Verrier Elwin: An Autobiography appeared twelve years later. When he began to write the book Elwin was sixty, and the victim already of two heart attacks. He knew he had not long to live (in fact the book was published three months after

his death). Elwin deliberately set about recording the details of his life before a biographer could. There is thus a satisfying completeness about the narrative, which runs from the cradle almost to the pyre. The focus is on his work for the tribal communities of India, among whom he lived for thirty years and of whose culture he became the foremost interpreter. People, incidents, campaigns and books are all described with care and detail. There remains in his book a political purpose, which is very nearly the reverse of Corbett's. The shikari had sought, albeit indirectly, to memorialize the Empire. The anthropologist, on the other hand, shows how it is possible to subordinate one's Englishness to the claims of Gandhian nationalism. He had even wished to call his book *Autobiography of an British-born Indian*.

Sálim Ali's *The Fall of a Sparrow* was published in 1985. He was then eighty-seven. As a 'last' work it shares some of the characteristics of the Western scientific memoir. The ornithologist knew that his days of original research had passed, much as Russell recognized, when he wrote his autobiography, that he had nothing more to offer to philosophy or social theory. The scientist could, however, recount with affection how the experiments had been conducted and the books written. In his search for new species Sálim Ali cut through a wide swathe of the subcontinent, from the arid highlands of Ladakh to the humid tropical forests of Kerala. *The Fall of a Sparrow* recollects those travels of thirty and forty years ago with a warm nostalgia. The book is remarkable for the absence of even a whiff of politics. Sálim Ali had lived fifty years as the subject of an alien empire and nearly forty as a citizen of a free nation. But unlike Corbett or Elwin he sought neither to apologize for the British nor to justify the Indians. His background may explain this silence. He came from one of the most distinguished of Bombay families, which had produced an early President of the Indian National Congress as well as one of the first 'native' members of the Indian Civil Service. Sálim Ali could partake without any fuss both of Indian nationalism and Western culture. Why bother to declare a preference for one or the other?

The work of Corbett, Elwin, and Ali is notable for its spotlighting of aspects of Indian life for the most part neglected by historians, journalists, anthropologists, novelists, and autobiographers. For the classic opposition of literature and politics in India, as elsewhere in the modern world, is between City and Village. Gandhi wished to reground Indian political life in the countryside, Nehru to bring the best of science and industry to the peasant, Chaudhuri to move from the village to the world of civilization as embodied by the city. Their preoccupation with this polarity was completely reproduced by their contemporaries. One might write of the clash between the two domains, or how each is marked by a distinctive set of morals, attitudes, and lifestyles. One might loudly declare a preference for one over the other. But, as with Gandhi, Nehru or Chaudhuri, one could not escape the basic opposition of the westernizing City and the caste-and-tradition-bound Hindu Village.

Our three authors, by contrast, wrote of a Third India, which lay beyond the first two. Thus in his ethnographies Elwin brought to wider attention the poetry and ways of life of people separated from a Hindu civilization which noticed them only to patronize. Sálim Ali wrote more than twenty books about the non-human residents of the Indian landscape, birds in particular. This thematic obsession, of tribals in the one case and of birds in the other, also dominates their respective autobiographies. In this respect Jim Corbett's *My India* is at a slight angle to his other works. In books such as *The Man-Eating Leopard of Rudraprayag* and *Jungle Lore* he had written with rich insight and deep intimacy about the wild animals of the forest. In the memoir the balance between man and animal is roughly even. But taking his oeuvre as a whole, the humans are seen to make a late and even apologetic entry.

The three works printed together here were all written very late in the lives of their authors. That alone distinguishes them from the holy trinity of Indo-Anglian autobiography. So, more decisively, does their style. These are works of enchantment and discovery, not personal victories disguised as political testaments. There is

always an innocent wonder about these accounts. Unlike Gandhi or Chaudhuri these men did not turn prematurely grey. One will not read their autobiographies for insights into Indian nationalism or Western civilization. The India of their books is more appealing if sometimes slightly less worthy than the India of Gandhi and Nehru. What shines through is a love of natural beauty and cultural diversity. So does a completely unselfconscious humility. One could read these three books and still not know for certain that Verrier Elwin was a great pioneering anthropologist, that Sálím Ali was (with the exception only of C. V. Raman) the finest scientist produced by India, that Jim Corbett was the most accurate marksman this side of the Suez.

III

It remains for me to say a word or two about the person common to all three books. He is explicitly acknowledged in *The Fall of a Sparrow*, as its dedicatee. He peeps in and out of *The Tribal World*, once as a caring host, again as a conscientious proof-reader. He is mentioned not at all in *My India*, although he contributed a great deal to that book as well.

After graduating from Oxford R. E. Hawkins came to India in 1930 to teach. But the college he was to join was closed in sympathy with Gandhi's non-co-operation movement, so Hawkins went to Oxford University Press instead. For thirty years he ran OUP's India operations. As one of his successors has written, 'although the OUP had been established here in 1912, much of the credit for strengthening its foundations and making it into an enduring first-rate publishing house goes to Hawkins'.

In one way or another R. E. Hawkins helped make our three writers. Himself a keen naturalist, Hawkins must have met Sálím Ali through the Bombay Natural History Society. At a time when Indian ornithology was the exclusive preserve of European officials Sálím Ali had written a new, updated account of the birds of the

subcontinent. He was not white; worse, he did not even have a bachelor's degree. This did not stop Hawkins from publishing *The Book of Indian Birds* in 1941. The work went into multiple editions: OUP published them all, not to speak of all the other books by the same author. By the time Sálím Ali's last work was published Hawkins had retired. But its dedication acknowledged that without him there might never have been a first.

Hawkins also played a formative role in the rise to literary stardom of Jim Corbett. In 1943 Corbett wrote to OUP from the Kumaon hills, offering some shikar stories for publication. The covering letter indicated that he hoped they would be read by army officers and other outdoorsmen. The publisher had higher or, shall we say, more material ambitions. When the stories, considerably revised, were published as *Man-Eaters of Kumaon* they were read in places other than the Sahranpur Infantry Officers Mess. The book became a worldwide best-seller, was translated legally into a dozen languages, and illegally into another half-dozen (those published behind the Iron Curtain). It was even distorted into a Hollywood film. Prodded by Hawkins, Corbett wrote a very successful series of such books and, finally, the memoir *My India*. All his books are making the OUP money still.

Hawkins and Elwin were friends long before they became publisher and author. Both lived on the margins of white society in India. The sahibs never knew quite what to make of them. Were they, or were they not, paid-up members of the Club? Both were attracted by Gandhi's spiritualism but repelled sometimes by his sanctimoniousness. They wore khadi but also liked their whisky. Both experimented, unsuccessfully, with brahmacharya.

In the mid-thirties Elwin had published four books with John Murray in London. Then came the war, and paper shortages in England. In 1940 Hawkins adroitly asked Elwin to switch allegiance to the OUP. For the next twenty-five years the relationship continued, to great mutual profit. OUP was to publish all but one of Elwin's major ethnographies and folklore collections. The bonds, both personal and professional, were deep and lasting. Although

Jonathan Cape in the UK and Alfred Knopf in the US each expressed an interest in publishing his autobiography, Elwin chose finally to put friendship above pecuniary gain, staying with the OUP for his last book.

As I have said, the name of R. E. Hawkins does not appear in *My India*. It is casually mentioned in *The Tribal World*, although one must have access to the OUP archives in Mumbai to appreciate how much the editor contributed to the printed book. And one can be certain that if Hawkins had still been General Manager of OUP *The Fall of a Sparrow* would have been dedicated to somebody else. How different are the times we live in. No autobiography, it seems, can now go out into the world without extended and equal acknowledgement of the role played by the author's agent, partner, editor and dog.

My India

JIM CORBETT

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DEDICATION

If you are looking for a history of India, or for an account of the rise and fall of the British raj, or for the reason for the cleaving of the subcontinent into two mutually antagonistic parts and the effect this mutilation will have on the respective sections, and ultimately on Asia, you will not find it in these pages; for though I have spent a lifetime in the country, I lived too near the seat of events, and was too intimately associated with the actors, to get the perspective needed for the impartial recording of these matters.

In my India, the India I know, there are four hundred million people, ninety per cent. of whom are simple, honest, brave, loyal, hard-working souls whose daily prayer to God, and to whatever Government is in power, is to give them security of life and of property to enable them to enjoy the fruits of their labours. It is of these people, who are admittedly poor, and who are often described as 'India's starving millions', among whom I have lived and whom I love, that I shall endeavour to tell in the pages of this book, which I humbly dedicate to my friends, the poor of India.

Introduction

HAVING read my dedication you may ask: 'Who are these poor of India that you mention?' 'What do you mean by "My India"?' The questions are justified. The world has developed the habit of using the word 'Indian' to denote an inhabitant of the great peninsula that stretches upwards of two thousand miles from north to south, and as much from east to west. Geographically the term may pass muster, but when it comes to applying it to the people themselves one should not, without further explanation, use a description whose looseness has already led to infinite misunderstanding. The four hundred million people of India are divided horizontally by race, tribe, and caste into a far greater diversity than exists in Europe, and they are cleft vertically by religious differences fully as deep as those which sunder any one nation from another. It was religion, not race, that split the Indian Empire into Hindustan and Pakistan. Let me, therefore, explain what I mean by the title of this book.

'My India', about which these sketches of village life and work are written, refers to those portions of a vast land which I have known from my earliest days, and where I have worked; and the simple folk whose ways and characters I have tried to depict for you are those among whom I spent the greater part of seventy years. Look at a map of India. Pick out Cape Comorin, the most southerly point of the peninsula, and run your eye straight up to where the Gangetic Plain slopes up into the foothills of the Himalayas in the north of the United Provinces. There you will find the hill station of Naini Tal, the summer seat of the Government of the United Provinces, packed from April

to November with Europeans and wealthier Indians seeking escape from the heat of the plains, and occupied during the winter only by a few permanent residents, of whom most of my life I was one. Now leave this hill station and run your eye down the Ganges river on its way to the sea, past Allahabad, Benares, and Patna, till you reach Mokameh Ghat, where I laboured for twenty-one years. The scenes of my sketches centre round these two points in India: Naini Tal and Mokameh Ghat.

In addition to many footpaths, Naini Tal is accessible by a motor road of which we are justly proud, for it has the reputation of being the best-aligned and the best-maintained hill road in India. Starting at the railway terminus of Kathgodam the road, in its course of twenty-two miles, passes through forests where occasionally tiger and the dread hamadryad are to be seen, and climbs 4,500 feet by easy gradients to Naini Tal. Naini Tal can best be described as an open valley running east and west, surrounded on three sides by hills, the highest of which, Cheena, rises to a height of 8,569 feet. It is open at the end from which the motor road approaches it. Nestling in the valley is a lake a little more than two miles in circumference, fed at the upper end by a perennial spring and overflowing at the other end where the motor road terminates. At the upper and lower ends of the valley there are bazaars, and the surrounding wooded hills are dotted with residential houses, churches, schools, clubs, and hotels. Near the margin of the lake are boat houses, a picturesque Hindu temple, and a very sacred rock shrine presided over by an old Brahmin priest who has been a lifelong friend of mine.

Geologists differ in their opinion as to the origin of the

lake, some attributing it to glaciers and landslides, others to volcanic action. Hindu legends, however, give the credit for the lake to three ancient sages, Atri, Pulastya, and Pulaha. The sacred book *Skanda-Puran* tells how, while on a penitential pilgrimage, these three sages arrived at the crest of Cheena and, finding no water to quench their thirst, dug a hole at the foot of the hill and syphoned water into it from Manasarowar, the sacred lake in Tibet. After the departure of the sages the goddess Naini arrived and took up her abode in the waters of the lake. In course of time forests grew on the sides of the excavation and, attracted by the water and the vegetation, birds and animals in great numbers made their home in the valley. Within a radius of four miles of the goddess's temple I have, in addition to other animals, seen tiger, leopard, bear, and sambhar, and in the same area identified one hundred and twenty-eight varieties of birds.

Rumours of the existence of the lake reached the early administrators of this part of India, and as the hill people were unwilling to disclose the position of their sacred lake, one of these administrators, in the year 1839, hit on the ingenious plan of placing a large stone on the head of a hill man, telling him he would have to carry it until he arrived at goddess Naini's lake. After wandering over the hills for many days the man eventually got tired of carrying the stone, and led the party who were following him to the lake. The stone alleged to have been carried by the man was shown to me when I was a small boy, and when I remarked that it was a very big stone for a man to carry—it weighed about six hundred pounds—the hill man who showed it to me said, 'Yes, it is a big stone, but you must remember that in those days our people were very strong'.

Provide yourself now with a good pair of field glasses and accompany me to the top of Cheena. From here you will get a bird's-eye view of the country surrounding Naini Tal. The road is steep, but if you are interested in birds, trees, and flowers you will not mind the three-mile climb and if you arrive at the top thirsty, as the three sages did, I will show you a crystal-clear spring of cold water to quench your thirst. Having rested and eaten your lunch, turn now to the north. Immediately below you is a deep well-wooded valley running down to the Kosi river. Beyond the river are a number of parallel ridges with villages dotted here and there; on one of these ridges is the town of Almora, and on another, the cantonment of Ranikhet. Beyond these again are more ridges, the highest of which, Dungar Buqual, rises to a height of 14,200 feet and is dwarfed into insignificance by the mighty mass of the snow-clad Himalayas. Sixty miles due north of you, as the crow flies, is Trisul, and to the east and to the west of this imposing 23,406-foot peak the snow mountains stretch in an unbroken line for many hundreds of miles. Where the snows fade out of sight to the west of Trisul are first the Gangotri group, then the glaciers and mountains above the sacred shrines of Kedarnath and Badrinath, and then Kamet made famous by Smythe. To the east of Trisul, and set farther back, you can just see the top of Nanda Devi (25,689 feet), the highest mountain in India. To your right front is Nanda Kot, the spotless pillow of the goddess Parvati, and a little farther east are the beautiful peaks of Panch Chuli, the 'five cooking-places' used by the Pandavas while on their way to Kailas in Tibet. At the first approach of dawn, while Cheena and the intervening hills are still shrouded in the mantle of night, the snowy range

changes from indigo blue to rose pink, and as the sun touches the peaks nearest to heaven the pink gradually changes to dazzling white. During the day the mountains show up cold and white, each crest trailing a feather of powdered snow, and in the setting sun the scene may be painted pink, gold, or red according to the fancy of heaven's artist.

Turn your back now on the snows and face south. At the limit of your range of vision you will see three cities: Bareilly, Kashipur, and Moradabad. These three cities, the nearest of which, Kashipur, is some fifty miles as the crow flies, are on the main railway that runs between Calcutta and the Punjab. There are three belts of country between the railway and the foothills: first a cultivated belt some twenty miles wide, then a grass belt ten miles wide known as the Terai, and third a tree belt ten miles wide known as the Bhabar. In the Bhabar belt, which extends right up to the foothills, clearings have been made, and on this rich fertile soil, watered by many streams, villages of varying size have been established.

The nearest group of villages, Kaladhungi, is fifteen miles from Naini Tal by road, and at the upper end of this group you will see our village, Choti Haldwani, surrounded by a three-mile-long stone wall. Only the roof of our cottage, which is at the junction of the road running down from Naini Tal with the road skirting the foothills, is visible in a group of big trees. The foothills in this area are composed almost entirely of iron ore, and it was at Kaladhungi that iron was first smelted in northern India. The fuel used was wood, and as the King of Kumaon, General Sir Henry Ramsay, feared that the furnaces would consume all the forests in the Bhabar, he closed down the

foundries. Between Kaladhungi and your seat on Cheena the low hills are densely wooded with sal, the trees which supply our railways with ties, or sleepers, and in the nearest fold of the ridge nestles the little lake of Khurpa Tal, surrounded by fields on which the best potatoes in India are grown. Away in the distance, to the right, you can see the sun glinting on the Ganges, and to the left you can see it glinting on the Sarda; the distance between these two rivers where they leave the foothills is roughly two hundred miles.

Now turn to the east, and before you in the near and middle distance you will see the country described in old gazetteers as 'the district of sixty lakes'. Many of these lakes have silted up, some in my lifetime, and the only ones of any size that now remain are Naini Tal, Sat Tal, Bhim Tal, and Nakuchia Tal. Beyond Nakuchia Tal is the cone-shaped hill, Choti Kailas. The gods do not favour the killing of bird or beast on this sacred hill, and the last man who disregarded their wishes—a soldier on leave during the war—unaccountably lost his footing after killing a mountain goat and, in full view of his two companions, fell a thousand feet into the valley below. Beyond Choti Kailas is the Kala Agar ridge on which I hunted the Chowgarh man-eating tiger for two years, and beyond this ridge the mountains of Nepal fade out of sight.

Turn now to the west. But first it will be necessary for you to descend a few hundred feet and take up a new position on Deopatta, a rocky peak 7,991 feet high adjoining Cheena. Immediately below you is a deep, wide, and densely wooded valley which starts on the saddle between Cheena and Deopatta and extends through Dachouri to Kaladhungi. It is richer in flora and fauna

than any other in the Himalayas, and beyond this beautiful valley the hills extend in an unbroken line up to the Ganges, the waters of which you can see glinting in the sun over a hundred miles away. On the far side of the Ganges are the Siwalik range of hills—hills that were old before the mighty Himalayas were born.

I

The Queen of the Village

COME with me now to one of the villages you saw in your bird's-eye view from the top of Cheena. The parallel lines you saw etched across the face of the hill are terraced fields. Some of these are no more than ten feet wide, and the stone walls supporting them are in some cases thirty feet high. The ploughing of these narrow fields, with a steep hill on one side and a big drop on the other, is a difficult and a dangerous job, and is only made possible by the use of a plough with a short shaft and of cattle that have been bred on the hills and that are in consequence small and stocky, and as sure-footed as goats. The stout-hearted people, who with infinite labour have made these terraced fields, live in a row of stone houses with slate roofs bordering the rough and narrow road that runs from the Bhabar, and the plains beyond, to the inner Himalayas. The people in this village know me, for in response to an urgent telegram, which the whole village subscribed to send me, and which was carried by runner to Naini Tal for transmission, I once came hot-foot from Mokameh Ghat, where I was working, to rid them of a man-eating tiger.

The incident which necessitated the sending of the telegram took place at midday in a field just above the row of houses. A woman and her twelve-year-old daughter were reaping wheat when a tiger suddenly appeared. As the girl attempted to run to her mother for protection the tiger struck at her, severed her head from her body, and catching the body in mid-air bounded away into the

jungle adjoining the field, leaving the head near the mother's feet.

Telegrams, even urgent ones, take long in transmission, and as I had to do a journey of a thousand miles by rail and road, and the last twenty miles on foot, a week elapsed between the sending of the telegram and my arrival at the village; and in the meantime the tiger made another kill. The victim on this occasion was a woman who, with her husband and children, had lived for years in the compound of the house adjoining our home in Naini Tal. This woman, in company with several others, was cutting grass on the hill above the village when she was attacked by the tiger, killed, and carried off in full view of her companions. The screams of the frightened women were heard in the village, and, while the women were running back to Naini Tal to report the tragedy, the men of the village assembled and with great gallantry drove away the tiger. Knowing—with an Indian's trust—that I would respond to the telegram they had sent me, they wrapped the body in a blanket and tied it to the topmost branch of a thirty-foot rhododendron tree. From the tiger's subsequent actions it was evident that he had been lying up close by and had watched these proceedings, for if he had not seen the body being put up in a tree he would never have found it, as tigers have no sense of smell.

When the women made their report in Naini Tal the husband of the dead woman came to my sister Maggie and told her of the killing of his wife, and at crack of dawn next morning Maggie sent out some of our men to make a machan over the kill and to sit on the machan until I came, for I was expected to arrive that day. Materials for making the machan were procured at the village and, accompanied

by the villagers, my men proceeded to the rhododendron tree, where it was found that the tiger had climbed the tree, torn a hole in the blanket, and carried away the body. Again with commendable courage—for they were unarmed—the villagers and my men followed up the drag for half a mile; and on finding the partly eaten body they started to put up a machan in an oak tree immediately above it. Just as the machan was completed, a sportsman from Naini Tal, who was out on an all-day shoot, arrived quite by accident at the spot and, saying he was a friend of mine, he told my men to go away, as he would sit up for the tiger himself.

So, while my men returned to Naini Tal to make their report to me—for I had arrived in the meantime—the sportsman, his gunbearer, and a man carrying his lunch basket and a lantern, took up their positions on the machan. There was no moon, and an hour after dark the gunbearer asked the sportsman why he had allowed the tiger to carry away the kill, without firing at it. Refusing to believe that the tiger had been anywhere near the kill, the sportsman lit the lantern; and as he was letting it down on a length of string, to illuminate the ground, the string slipped through his fingers and the lantern crashed to the ground and caught fire. It was the month of May, when our forests are very dry, and within a minute the dead grass and brushwood at the foot of the tree were burning fiercely. With great courage the sportsman shinned down the tree and attempted to beat out the flames with his tweed coat, until he suddenly remembered the man-eater and hurriedly climbed back to the machan. He left his coat, which was on fire, behind him.

The illumination from the fire revealed the fact that

the kill was indeed gone, but the sportsman at this stage had lost all interest in kills, and his anxiety now was for his own safety, and for the damage the fire would do to the Government forest. Fanned by a strong wind the fire receded from the vicinity of the tree and eight hours later a heavy downpour of rain and hail extinguished it, but not before it had burnt out several square miles of forest. It was the sportsman's first attempt to make contact with a man-eater and, after his experience of first nearly having been roasted and later having been frozen, it was also his last. Next morning, while he was making his weary way back to Naini Tal by one road, I was on my way out to the village by another, in ignorance of what had happened the previous night.

At my request the villagers took me to the rhododendron tree and I was amazed to see how determined the tiger had been to regain possession of his kill. The torn blanket was some twenty-five feet from the ground, and the claw marks on the tree, the condition of the soft ground, and the broken brushwood at the foot of it, showed that the tiger had climbed and fallen off the tree at least twenty times before he eventually succeeded in tearing a hole in the blanket and removing the body. From this spot the tiger had carried the body half a mile, to the tree on which the machan had been built. Beyond this point the fire had obliterated all trace of a drag but, following on the line I thought the tiger would have taken, a mile farther on I stumbled on the charred head of the woman. A hundred yards beyond this spot there was heavy cover which the fire had not reached and for hours I searched this cover, right down to the foot of the valley five miles away, without, however, finding any trace of the tiger. (Five people lost

their lives between the accidental arrival of the sportsman at the machan, and the shooting of the tiger.)

I arrived back in the village, after my fruitless search of the cover, late in the evening, and the wife of the headman prepared for me a meal which her daughters placed before me on brass plates. After a very generous, and a very welcome meal—for I had eaten nothing that day—I picked up the plates with the intention of washing them in a nearby spring. Seeing my intention the three girls ran forward and relieved me of the plates, saying, with a toss of their heads and a laugh, that it would not break their caste—they were Brahmins—to wash the plates from which the White Sadhu had eaten.

The headman is dead now and his daughters have married and left the village, but his wife is alive, and you who are accompanying me to the village, after your bird's-eye view from Cheena, must be prepared to drink the tea, not made with water but with rich fresh milk sweetened with jaggery, which she will brew for us. Our approach down the steep hillside facing the village has been observed and a small square of frayed carpet and two wicker chairs, reinforced with ghooral skins, have been set ready for us. Standing near these chairs to welcome us is the wife of the headman; there is no purdah here and she will not be embarrassed if you take a good look at her, and she is worth looking at. Her hair, snow-white now, was raven-black when I first knew her, and her cheeks, which in those far-off days had a bloom on them, are now ivory-white, without a single crease or wrinkle. Daughter of a hundred generations of Brahmins, her blood is as pure as that of the ancestor who founded her line. Pride of pure ancestry is inherent in all men, but nowhere is there greater *respect* for

pure ancestry than there is in India. There are several different castes of people in the village this dear old lady administers, but her rule is never questioned and her word is law, not because of the strong arm of retainers, for of these she has none, but because she is a Brahmin, the salt of India's earth.

The high prices paid in recent years for field produce have brought prosperity—as it is known in India—to this hill village, and of this prosperity our hostess has had her full share. The string of fluted gold beads that she brought as part of her dowry are still round her neck, but the thin silver necklace has been deposited in the family bank, the hole in the ground under the cooking-place, and her neck is now encircled by a solid gold band. In the far-off days her ears were unadorned, but now she has a number of thin gold rings in the upper cartilage, and from her nose hangs a gold ring five inches in diameter, the weight of which is partly carried by a thin gold chain looped over her right ear. Her dress is the same as that worn by all high-caste hill women: a shawl, a tight-fitting bodice of warm material, and a voluminous print skirt. Her feet are bare, for even in these advanced days the wearing of shoes among our hill folk denotes that the wearer is unchaste.

The old lady has now retired to the inner recesses of her house to prepare tea, and while she is engaged on this pleasant task you can turn your attention to the bania's shop on the other side of the narrow road. The bania, too, is an old friend. Having greeted us and presented us with a packet of cigarettes he has gone back to squat cross-legged on the wooden platform on which his wares are exposed. These wares consist of the few articles that the village folk and wayfarers need in the way of atta, rice,

dal, ghee, salt, stale sweets purchased at a discount in the Naini Tal bazaar, hill potatoes fit for the table of a king, enormous turnips so fierce that when eaten in public they make the onlookers' eyes water, cigarettes and matches, a tin of kerosene oil, and near the platform and within reach of his hand an iron pan in which milk is kept simmering throughout the day.

As the bania takes his seat on the platform his few customers gather in front of him. First is a small boy, accompanied by an even smaller sister, who is the proud possessor of one pice,¹ all of which he is anxious to invest in sweets. Taking the pice from the small grubby hand the bania drops it into an open box. Then, waving his hand over the tray to drive away the wasps and flies, he picks up a square sweet made of sugar and curds, breaks it in half and puts a piece into each eager outstretched hand. Next comes a woman of the depressed class who has two annas to spend on her shopping. One anna is invested in atta, the coarse ground wheat that is the staple food of our hill folk, and two pice in the coarsest of the three qualities of dal exposed on the stall. With the remaining two pice she purchases a little salt and one of the fierce turnips and then, with a respectful salaam to the bania, for he is a man who commands respect, she hurries off to prepare the midday meal for her family.

While the woman is being served the shrill whistles and shouts of men herald the approach of a string of pack mules, carrying cloth from the Moradabad hand looms to the markets in the interior of the hills. The sweating mules have had a stiff climb up the rough road from the foothills,

¹ A pice is worth about a farthing, but is itself made up of three smaller coins called pies. Four pice make an anna, sixteen annas a rupee.

and while they are having a breather the four men in charge have sat down on the bench provided by the bania for his customers and are treating themselves to a cigarette and a glass of milk. Milk is the strongest drink that has ever been served at this shop, or at any other of the hundreds of wayside shops throughout the hills, for, except for those few who have come in contact with what is called civilization, our hill men do not drink. Drinking among women, in my India, is unknown.

No daily paper has ever found its way into this village, and the only news the inhabitants get of the outside world is from an occasional trip into Naini Tal and from wayfarers, the best-informed of whom are the packmen. On their way into the hills they bring news of the distant plains of India, and on their return journey a month or so later they have news from the trading centres where they sell their wares.

The tea the old lady has prepared for us is now ready. You must be careful how you handle the metal cup filled to the brim, for it is hot enough to take the skin off your hands. Interest has now shifted from the packmen to us, and whether or not you like the sweet, hot liquid you must drink every drop of it, for the eyes of the entire village, whose guest you are, are on you; and to leave any dregs in your cup would mean that you did not consider the drink good enough for you. Others have attempted to offer recompense for hospitality but we will not make this mistake, for these simple and hospitable people are intensely proud, and it would be as great an insult to offer to pay the dear old lady for her cup of tea as it would have been to have offered to pay the bania for his packet of cigarettes.

So, as we leave this village, which is only one of the many thousands of similar villages scattered over the vast area viewed through your good field glasses from the top of Cheena, where I have spent the best part of my life, you can be assured that the welcome we received on arrival, and the invitation to return soon, are genuine expressions of the affection and goodwill of the people in my India for all who know and understand them.

II

Kunwar Singh

KUNWAR SINGH was by caste a Thakur, and the headman of Chandni Chauk village. Whether he was a good or a bad headman I do not know. What endeared him to me was the fact that he was the best and the most successful poacher in Kaladhungi, and a devoted admirer of my eldest brother Tom, my boyhood's hero.

Kunwar Singh had many tales to tell of Tom, for he had accompanied him on many of his shikar expeditions, and the tale I like best, and that never lost anything in repetition, concerned an impromptu competition between brother Tom and a man by the name of Ellis, whom Tom had beaten by one point the previous year to win the B.P.R.A. gold medal for the best rifle-shot in India.

Tom and Ellis, unknown to each other, were shooting in the same jungle near Garuppu, and early one morning, when the mist was just rising above the tree tops, they met on the approach to some high ground overlooking a wide depression in which, at that hour of the morning, deer and pig were always to be found. Tom was accompanied by Kunwar Singh, while Ellis was accompanied by a shikari from Naini Tal named Budhoo, whom Kunwar Singh despised because of his low caste and his ignorance of all matters connected with the jungles. After the usual greetings, Ellis said that, though Tom had beaten him by one miserable point on the rifle range, he would show Tom that he was a better game shot; and he suggested that they should each fire two shots to prove the point. Lots were

drawn and Ellis, winning, decided to fire first. A careful approach was then made to the low ground, Ellis carrying the .450 Martini-Henry rifle with which he had competed at the B.P.R.A. meeting, while Tom carried a .400 D.B. express by Westley-Richards of which he was justly proud, for few of these weapons had up to that date arrived in India.

The wind may have been wrong, or the approach careless. Anyway, when the competitors topped the high ground, no animals were in sight on the low ground. On the near side of the low ground there was a strip of dry grass beyond which the grass had been burnt, and it was on this burnt ground, now turning green with sprouting new shoots, that animals were to be seen both morning and evening. Kunwar Singh was of the opinion that some animals might be lurking in the strip of dry grass, and at his suggestion he and Budhoo set fire to it.

When the grass was well alight and the drongos, rollers, and starlings were collecting from the four corners of the heavens to feed on the swarms of grasshoppers that were taking flight to escape from the flames, a movement was observed at the farther edge of the grass, and presently two big boar came out and went streaking across the burnt ground for the shelter of the tree jungle three hundred yards away. Very deliberately Ellis, who weighed fourteen stone, knelt down, raised his rifle and sent a bullet after the hindmost pig, kicking up the dust between its hind legs. Lowering his rifle, Ellis adjusted the back sight to two hundred yards, ejected the spent cartridge, and rammed a fresh one into the breach. His second bullet sent up a cloud of dust immediately in front of the leading pig.

This second bullet deflected the pigs to the right, bringing them broadside on to the guns, and making them increase their speed. It was now Tom's turn to shoot, and to shoot in a hurry, for the pigs were fast approaching the tree jungle, and getting out of range. Standing four-square, Tom raised his rifle and, as the two shots rang out the pigs, both shot through the head, went over like rabbits. Kunwar Singh's recital of this event invariably ended up with: 'And then I turned to Budhoo, that city-bred son of a low-caste man, the smell of whose oiled hair offended me, and said, "Did you see that, you, who boasted that your sahib would teach mine how to shoot? Had my sahib wanted to blacken the face of yours he would not have used two bullets, but would have killed both pigs with one".' Just how this feat could have been accomplished, Kunwar Singh never told me, and I never asked, for my faith in my hero was so great that I never for one moment doubted that, if he had wished, he could have killed both pigs with one bullet.

Kunwar Singh was the first to visit me that day of days when I was given my first gun. He came early, and as with great pride I put the old double-barrelled muzzle-loader into his hands he never, even by the flicker of an eyelid, showed that he had seen the gaping split in the right barrel, or the lappings of brass wire that held the stock and the barrels together. Only the good qualities of the left barrel were commented on, and extolled; its length, thickness, and the years of service it would give. And then, laying the gun aside, he turned to me and gladdened my eight-year-old heart and made me doubly proud of my possession by saying: 'You are now no longer a boy, but a man; and with this good gun you can go anywhere you

like in our jungles and never be afraid, provided you learn how to climb trees; and I will now tell you a story to show how necessary it is for us men who shoot in the jungles to know how to do so.

‘Har Singh and I went out to shoot one day last April, and all would have been well if a fox had not crossed our path as we were leaving the village. Har Singh, as you know, is a poor shikari with little knowledge of the jungle folk, and when, after seeing the fox, I suggested we should turn round and go home he laughed at me and said it was child’s talk to say that a fox would bring us bad luck. So we continued on our way. We had started when the stars were paling, and near Garuppu I fired at a chital stag and unaccountably missed it. Later Har Singh broke the wing of a pea fowl, but though we chased the wounded bird as hard as we could it got away in the long grass, where we lost it. Thereafter, though we combed the jungles we saw nothing to shoot, and towards the evening we turned our faces towards home.

‘Having fired two shots, and being afraid that the forest guards would be looking for us, we avoided the road and took a sandy nullah that ran through dense scrub and thorn-bamboo jungle. As we went along talking of our bad luck, suddenly a tiger came out into the nullah and stood looking at us. For a long minute the tiger stared and then it turned and went back the way it had come.

‘After waiting a suitable time we continued on our way, when the tiger again came out into the nullah; and this time, as it stood and looked at us, it was growling and twitching its tail. We again stood quite still, and after a time the tiger quietened down and left the nullah. A little later a number of jungle fowl rose cackling out of the dense

scrub, evidently disturbed by the tiger, and one of them came and sat on a haldu tree right in front of us. As the bird alighted on a branch in full view of us, Har Singh said he would shoot it and so avoid going home empty handed. He added that the shot would frighten away the tiger, and before I could stop him he fired.

‘Next second there was a terrifying roar as the tiger came crashing through the brushwood towards us. At this spot there were some runi trees growing on the edge of the nullah, and I dashed towards one while Har Singh dashed towards another. My tree was the nearer to the tiger, but before it arrived I had climbed out of reach. Har Singh had not learnt to climb trees when a boy, as I had, and he was still standing on the ground, reaching up and trying to grasp a branch, when the tiger, after leaving me, sprang at him. The tiger did not bite or scratch Har Singh, but standing on its hind legs it clasped the tree, pinning Har Singh against it, and then started to claw big bits of bark and wood off the far side of the tree. While it was so engaged, Har Singh was screaming and the tiger was roaring. I had taken my gun up into the tree with me, so now, holding on with my bare feet, I cocked the hammer and fired the gun off into the air. On hearing the shot so close to it the tiger bounded away, and Har Singh collapsed at the foot of the tree.

‘When the tiger had been gone some time, I climbed down very silently, and went to Har Singh. I found that one of the tiger’s claws had entered his stomach and torn the lining from near his navel to within a few fingers’ breadth of the backbone, and that all his inside had fallen out. Here was great trouble for me. I could not run away and leave Har Singh, and not having any experience in

these matters, I did not know whether it would be best to try and put all that mass of inside back into Har Singh's stomach, or cut it off. I talked in whispers on this matter with Har Singh, for we were afraid that if the tiger heard us it would return and kill us, and Har Singh was of the opinion that his inside should be put back into his stomach. So, while he lay on his back on the ground, I stuffed it all back, including the dry leaves and grass and bits of sticks that were sticking to it. I then wound my pugree round him, knotting it tight to keep everything from falling out again, and we set out on the seven-mile walk to our village, myself in front, carrying the two guns, while Har Singh walked behind.

'We had to go slowly, for Har Singh was holding the pugree in position, and on the way night came on and Har Singh said he thought it would be better to go to the hospital at Kaladhungi than to our village; so I hid the guns, and we went the extra three miles to the hospital. The hospital was closed when we arrived, but the doctor babu who lives near by was awake, and when he heard our story he sent me to call Aladia the tobacco seller, who is also postmaster at Kaladhungi and who receives five rupees pay per month from Government, while he lit a lantern and went to the hospital hut with Har Singh. When I returned with Aladia, the doctor had laid Har Singh on a string bed and, while Aladia held the lantern and I held the two pieces of flesh together, the doctor sewed up the hole in Har Singh's stomach. Thereafter the doctor, who is a very kind man of raw years and who refused to take the two rupees I offered him, gave Har Singh a drink of very good medicine to make him forget the pain in his stomach and we went home and found our womenfolk

crying, for they thought we had been killed in the jungle by dacoits, or by wild animals. So you see, Sahib, how necessary it is for us men who shoot in the jungles to know how to climb trees, for if Har Singh had had someone to advise him when he was a boy, he would not have brought all that trouble on us.'¹

I learnt many things from Kunwar Singh during the first few years that I carried the old muzzle-loader, one of them being the making of mental maps. The jungles we hunted in, sometimes together, but more often alone—for Kunwar Singh had a horror of dacoits and there were times when for weeks on end he would not leave his village—were many hundreds of miles square with only one road running through them. Times without number when returning from a shoot I called in at Kunwar Singh's village, which was three miles nearer the forest than my house was, to tell him I had shot a chital or sambhar stag, or maybe a big pig, and to ask him to retrieve the bag. He never once failed to do so, no matter in how great a wilderness of tree or scrub or grass jungle I had carefully hidden the animal I had shot, to protect it from vultures. We had a name for every outstanding tree, and for every water hole, game track, and nullah. All our distances were measured by imaginary flight of a bullet fired from a muzzle-loader, and all our directions fixed by

¹ The runi tree against which the tigress—who evidently had just given birth to cubs in that area, and who resented the presence of human beings—pinned Har Singh was about eighteen inches thick, and in her rage the tigress tore away a third of it. This tree became a landmark for all who shot or poached in the Garuppu jungles until, some twenty-five years later, it was destroyed by a forest fire.

Har Singh, in spite of the rough and ready treatment he received at the hands of his three friends, and in spite of the vegetation that went inside him, suffered no ill effects from his wound, and lived to die of old age.

the four points of the compass. When I had hidden an animal, or Kunwar Singh had seen vultures collected on a tree and suspected that a leopard or a tiger had made a kill, either he or I would set out with absolute confidence that we would find the spot indicated, no matter what time of day or night it might be.

After I left school and started work in Bengal I was only able to visit Kaladhungi for about three weeks each year, and I was greatly distressed to find on one of these annual visits that my old friend Kunwar Singh had fallen a victim to the curse of our foothills, opium. With a constitution weakened by malaria the pernicious habit grew on him, and though he made me many promises he had not the moral strength to keep them. I was therefore not surprised, on my visit to Kaladhungi one February, to be told by the men in our village that Kunwar Singh was very seriously ill. News of my arrival spread through Kaladhungi that night, and next day Kunwar Singh's youngest son, a lad of eighteen, came hot-foot to tell me that his father was at death's door, and that he wished to see me before he died.

As headman of Chandni Chauk, paying Government land revenue of four thousand rupees, Kunwar Singh was an important person, and lived in a big stone-built house with a slate roof in which I had often enjoyed his hospitality. Now as I approached the village in company with his son, I heard the wailing of women coming, not from the house, but from a small one-roomed hut Kunwar Singh had built for one of his servants. As the son led me towards this hut, he said his father had been moved to it because the grandchildren disturbed his sleep. Seeing us coming, Kunwar Singh's eldest son stepped out of the hut and informed

me that his father was unconscious, and that he only had a few minutes to live.

I stopped at the door of the hut, and when my eyes had got accustomed to the dim light, made dimmer by a thick pall of smoke which filled the room, I saw Kunwar Singh lying on the bare mud floor, naked, and partly covered with a sheet. His nerveless right arm was supported by an old man sitting on the floor near him, and his fingers were being held round the tail of a cow. (This custom of a dying man being made to hold the tail of a cow—preferably that of a black heifer—has its origin in the Hindu belief that when the spirit leaves its earthly body it is confronted with a river of blood, on the far side of which sits the Judge before whom the spirit must appear to answer for its sins. The heifer's tail is the only way by which the departing spirit can cross the river, and if the spirit is not provided with means of transit it is condemned to remain on earth, to be a torment to those who failed to enable it to appear before the judgment seat.) Near Kunwar Singh's head was a brazier with cow-dung cakes burning on it, and by the brazier a priest was sitting, intoning prayers and ringing a bell. Every available inch of floor space was packed with men, and with women who were wailing and repeating over and over again, 'He has gone! He has gone!'

I knew men died like this in India every day, but I was not going to let my friend be one of them. In fact, if I could help it he would not die at all, and anyway not at present. Striding into the room, I picked up the iron brazier, which was hotter than I expected it to be, and burnt my hands. This I carried to the door and flung outside. Returning, I cut the bark rope by which the cow was

tethered to a peg driven into the mud floor, and led it outside. As these acts, which I had performed in silence, became evident to the people assembled in the room, the hubbub began to die down, and it ceased altogether when I took the priest's arm and conducted him from the room. Then, standing at the door, I ordered everyone to go outside, the order was obeyed without a murmur or a single protest. The number of people, both old and young, who emerged from the hut was incredible. When the last of them had crossed the doorstep, I told Kunwar Singh's eldest son to warm two seers of fresh milk and to bring it to me with as little delay as possible. The man looked at me in blank surprise, but when I repeated the order he hurried off to execute it.

I now re-entered the hut, pulled forward a string bed which had been pushed against the wall, picked Kunwar Singh up and laid him on it. Fresh air, and plenty of it, was urgently needed, and as I looked round I saw a small window which had been boarded up. It did not take long to tear down the boards and let a stream of clean sweet air blow directly from the jungles into the overheated room which reeked with the smell of human beings, cow dung, burnt ghee, and acrid smoke.

When I picked up Kunwar Singh's wasted frame, I knew there was a little life in it, but only a very little. His eyes, which were sunk deep into his head, were closed, his lips were blue, and his breath was coming in short gasps. Soon, however, the fresh, clean air began to revive him and his breathing became less laboured and more regular, and presently, as I sat on his bed and watched through the door the commotion that was taking place among the mourners whom I had ejected from the death-chamber, I

became aware that he had opened his eyes and was looking at me; and without turning my head, I began to speak.

'Times have changed, uncle, and you with them. There was a day when no man would have dared to remove you from your own house, and lay you on the ground in a servant's hut to die like an outcaste and a beggar. You would not listen to my words of warning and now the accursed drug has brought you to this. Had I delayed but a few minutes in answering your summons this day, you know you would by now have been on your way to the burning-ghat. As headman of Chandni Chauk and the best shikari in Kaladhungi, all men respected you. But now you have lost that respect, and you who were strong, and who ate of the best, are weak and empty of stomach, for as we came your son told me nothing has passed your lips for sixteen days. But you are not going to die, old friend, as they told you you were. You will live for many more years, and though we may never shoot together again in the Garuppu jungles, you will not want for game, for I will share all I shoot with you, as I have always done.

'And now, here in this hut, with the sacred thread round your fingers and a pipal leaf in your hands, you must swear an oath on your eldest son's head that never again will you touch the foul drug. And this time you will, and you *shall* keep your oath. And now, while we wait for the milk your son is bringing, we will smoke.'

Kunwar Singh had not taken his eyes off me while I was speaking, and now for the first time he opened his lips and said, 'How can a man who is dying smoke?'

'On the subject of dying', I said, 'we will say no more, for as I have just told you, you are not going to die. And as to how we will smoke, I will show you.'

Then, taking two cigarettes from my case, I lit one and placed it between his lips. Slowly he took a pull at it, coughed, and with a very feeble hand removed the cigarette. But when the fit of coughing was over, he replaced it between his lips and continued to draw on it. Before we had finished our smoke, Kunwar Singh's son returned carrying a big brass vessel, which he would have dropped at the door if I had not hurriedly relieved him of it. His surprise was understandable, for the father whom he had last seen lying on the ground dying, was now lying on the bed, his head resting on my hat, smoking. There was nothing in the hut to drink from, so I sent the son back to the house for a cup; and when he had brought it I gave Kunwar Singh a drink of warm milk.

I stayed in the hut till late into the night, and when I left Kunwar Singh had drunk a seer of milk and was sleeping peacefully on a warm and comfortable bed. Before I left I warned the son that he was on no account to allow anyone to come near the hut; that he was to sit by his father and give him a drink of milk every time he awoke; and that if on my return in the morning I found Kunwar Singh dead, I would burn down the village.

The sun was just rising next morning when I returned to Chandni Chauk to find both Kunwar Singh and his son fast asleep and the brass vessel empty.

Kunwar Singh kept his oath, and though he never regained sufficient strength to accompany me on my shikar expeditions, he visited me often and died peacefully four years later in his own house and on his own bed.

Mothi

MOTHI had the delicate, finely chiselled features that are the heritage of all high-caste people in India, but he was only a young stripling, all arms and legs, when his father and mother died and left him with the responsibilities of the family. Fortunately it was a small one, consisting only of his younger brother and sister.

Mothi was at that time fourteen years of age, and had been married for six years. One of his first acts on finding himself unexpectedly the head of the family was to fetch his twelve-year-old wife—whom he had not seen since the day of their wedding—from her father's house in the Kota Dun, some dozen miles from Kaladhungi.

As the cultivation of the six acres of land Mothi inherited entailed more work than the four young people could tackle, Mothi took on a partner, locally known as a *sagee*, who in return for his day-and-night services received free board and lodging and half of the crops produced. The building of the communal hut with bamboos and grass procured from the jungles, under permit, and carried long distances on shoulder and on head, and the constant repairs to the hut necessitated by the violent storms that sweep the foothills, threw a heavy burden on Mothi and his helpers, and to relieve them of this burden I built them a masonry house, with three rooms and a wide veranda, on a four-foot plinth. For, with the exception of Mothi's wife who had come from a higher altitude, all of them were steeped in malaria.

To protect their crops the tenants used to erect a thorn fence round the entire village, but though it entailed weeks of hard labour, this flimsy fence afforded little protection against stray cattle and wild animals, and when the crops were on the ground the tenants, or members of their families, had to keep watch in the fields all night. Firearms were strictly rationed, and for our forty tenants the Government allowed us one single-barrelled muzzle-loading gun. This gun enables one tenant in turn to protect his crops with a lethal weapon, while the others had to rely on tin cans which they beat throughout the night. Though the gun accounted for a certain number of pigs and porcupines, which were the worst offenders, the nightly damage was considerable, for the village was isolated and surrounded by forests. So, when my handling contract at Mokameh Ghat began paying a dividend, I started building a masonry wall round the village. When completed the wall was six feet high and three miles long. It took ten years to build, for my share of the dividends was small. If today you motor from Haldwani to Ramnagar, through Kaladhungi, you will skirt the upper end of the wall before you cross the Boar Bridge and enter the forest.

I was walking through the village one cold December morning, with Robin, my dog, running ahead and putting up covey after covey of grey partridge which no one but Robin ever disturbed—for all who lived in the village loved to hear them calling at sunrise and at sunset—when in the soft ground at the edge of one of the irrigation channels I saw the tracks of a pig. This pig, with great, curved, wicked-looking tusks, was as big as a buffalo calf and was known to everyone in the village. As a squeaker he had wormed his way through the thorn fence and fattened on the crops.

The wall had worried him at first, but it had a rough face and, being a determined pig, he had in time learnt to climb it. Time and time again the watchers in the fields had fired at him and on several occasions he had left a blood trail, but none of his wounds had proved fatal and the only effect they had had on him was to make him more wary.

On this December morning the pig's tracks led me towards Mothi's holding, and as I approached the house I saw Mothi's wife standing in front of it, her hands on her hips, surveying the ruin of their potato patch.

The pig had done a very thorough job, for the tubers were not mature and he had been hungry, and while Robin cast round to see in which direction the marauder had gone the woman gave vent to her feelings. 'It is all Punwa's father's fault', she said. 'It was his turn for the gun last night, and instead of staying at home and looking after his own property he must needs go and sit up in Kalu's wheat field because he thought there was a chance of shooting a sambhar there. And while he was away, this is what the shaitan has done.' No woman in our part of India ever refers to her husband, or addresses him, by name. Before children are born he is referred to as the man of the house, and after children come is spoken of and addressed as the father of the firstborn. Mothi now had three children, of whom the eldest was Punwa, so to his wife he was 'Punwa's father', and his wife to everyone in the village was 'Punwa's mother'.

Punwa's mother was not only the hardest-working woman in our village but she also had the sharpest tongue, and after telling me in no uncertain terms what she thought of Punwa's father for having absented himself the previous night, she turned on me and said I had wasted my money

in building a wall over which a pig could climb to eat her potatoes, and that if I could not shoot the pig myself it was my duty to raise the wall a few feet so that no pig could climb over it. Mothi fortunately arrived while the storm was still breaking over my head, so whistling to Robin I beat a hasty retreat and left him to weather it.

That evening I picked up the tracks of the pig on the far side of the wall and followed them for two miles, at times along game paths and at times along the bank of the Boar river, until they led me to a dense patch of thorn bushes interlaced with lantana. At the edge of this cover I took up position, as there was a fifty-fifty chance of the pig leaving the cover while there was still sufficient light for me to shoot by.

Shortly after I had taken up position behind a rock on the bank of the river, a sambhar hind started belling at the upper end of the jungle in which a few years later I was to shoot the Bachelor of Powalgarh.¹ The hind was warning the jungle folk of the presence of a tiger. A fortnight previously a party of three guns, with eight elephants, had arrived in Kaladhungi with the express purpose of shooting a tiger which, at that time, had his headquarters in the forest block for which I had a shooting pass. The Boar river formed the boundary between my block and the block taken by the party of three guns, and they had enticed the tiger to kill in their block by tying up fourteen young buffaloes on their side of the river. Two of these buffaloes had been killed by the tiger, the other twelve had died of neglect, and at about nine o'clock the previous night I had heard the report of a heavy rifle.

¹ See *Man-eaters of Kumaon*.

I sat behind the rock for two hours, listening to the belling sambhar but without seeing anything of the pig, and when there was no longer any light to shoot by I crossed the river and, gaining the Kota road, loped down it, easing up and moving cautiously when passing the caves in which a big python lived, and where Bill Bailey of the Forest Department a month previously had shot a twelve-foot hamadryad. At the village gate I stopped and shouted to Mothi to be ready to accompany me at crack of dawn next morning.

Mothi had been my constant companion in the Kaladhungi jungles for many years. He was keen and intelligent, gifted with good eyesight and hearing, could move through the jungles silently, and was as brave as man could be. He was never late for an appointment, and as we walked through the dew-drenched jungle that morning, listening to the multitude of sounds of the awakening jungle folk, I told him of the belling of the sambhar hind and of my suspicion that she had witnessed the killing of her young one by the tiger, and that she had stayed to watch the tiger on his kill—a not uncommon occurrence—for in no other way could I account for her sustained belling. Mothi was delighted at the prospect of our finding a fresh kill, for his means only permitted of his buying meat for his family once a month, and a sambhar, chital, or pig, freshly killed by a tiger or by a leopard, was a godsend to him.

I had located the belling sambhar as being due north and some fifteen hundred yards from me the previous evening, and when we arrived at this spot and found no kill we started looking on the ground for blood, hair, or a drag mark that would lead us to the kill; for I was still convinced that there was a kill to be found and that the

killer was a tiger. At this spot two shallow depressions, coming down from the foot of the hill a few hundred yards away, met. The depressions ran more or less parallel to each other at a distance of about thirty yards and Mothi suggested that he should go up the right-hand depression while I went up the other. As there were only low bushes between, and we should be close to, and within sight of, each other, I agreed to the suggestion.

We had proceeded a hundred yards examining every foot of the ground, and going dead slow, when Mothi, just as I turned my head to look at him started backwards, screaming as he did so. Then he whipped round and ran for dear life, beating the air with his hands as if warding off a swarm of bees and continuing to scream as he ran. The sudden and piercing scream of a human being in a jungle where a moment before all has been silent is terrifying to hear, and quite impossible to describe. Instinctively I knew what had happened. With his eyes fixed on the ground, looking for blood or hair, Mothi had failed to see where he was going, and had walked on to the tiger. Whether he had been badly mauled or not I could not see, for only his head and shoulders were visible above the bushes. I kept the sights of my rifle a foot behind him as he ran, intending to press the trigger if I saw any movement, but to my intense relief there was no movement as I swung round, and after he had covered a hundred yards I considered he was safe. I yelled to him to stop, adding that I was coming to him. Then, backing away for a few yards, for I did not know whether the tiger had changed his position I hurried down the depression towards Mothi. He was standing with his back against a tree and I was greatly relieved to see that there was no blood on him or on the ground on which he

was standing. As I reached him he asked what had happened, and when I told him that nothing had happened he expressed great surprise. He asked if the tiger had not sprung at him, or followed him; and when I replied that he had done everything possible to make the tiger do so, he said, 'I know, Sahib. I know I should not have screamed and run, but I—could—not—help—' As his voice tailed away and his head came forward I caught him by the throat, but he slipped through my hands and slumped to the ground. Every drop of blood had drained from his face, and as he lay minute after long minute without any movement, I feared the shock had killed him.

There is little one can do in the jungles in an emergency of this kind, and that little I did. I stretched Mothi on his back, loosened his clothes, and massaged the region of his heart. Just as I was giving up hope and preparing to carry him home, he opened his eyes.

When Mothi was comfortably seated on the ground with his back to the tree and a half-smoked cigarette between his lips I asked him to tell me exactly what had happened. 'I had gone a short distance up the depression after I left you', he said, 'closely examining the ground for traces of blood or hair, when I saw what looked like a spot of dry blood on a leaf. So I stooped down to have a closer look and, as I raised my head, I looked straight into the face of the tiger. The tiger was lying crouched down facing me at a distance of three or four paces. His head was a little raised off the ground; his mouth was wide open, and there was blood on his chin and on his chest. He looked as though he was on the point of springing at me, so I lost my head and screamed and ran away.' He had seen nothing of the sambhar kill. He said the ground was open and

free of bushes and there was no kill where the tiger was lying.

Telling Mothi to stay where he was I stubbed out my cigarette and set off to investigate, for I could think of no reason why a tiger with its mouth open, and blood on its chin and on its chest, should allow Mothi to approach within a few feet, over open ground, and not kill him when he screamed in its face. Going with the utmost caution to the spot where Mothi was standing when he screamed, I saw in front of me a bare patch of ground from which the tiger had swept the carpet of dead leaves as he had rolled from side to side; at the nearer edge of this bare patch of ground there was a semicircle of clotted blood. Skirting round where the tiger had been lying, to avoid disturbing the ground, I picked up on the far side of it a light and fresh blood trail, which for no apparent reason zigzagged towards the hill, and then continued along the foot of the hill for a few hundred yards and entered a deep and narrow ravine in which there was a little stream. Up this ravine, which ran deep into the foothills, the tiger had gone. I made my way back to the bare patch of ground and examined the clotted blood. There were splinters of bone and teeth in it, and these splinters provided me with the explanation I was looking for. The rifle-shot I had heard two nights previously had shattered the tiger's lower jaw, and he had made for the jungle in which he had his home. He had gone as far as his sufferings and loss of blood permitted and had then lain down on the spot where first the sambhar had seen him tossing about, and where thirty hours later Mothi walked on to him. The most painful wound that can be inflicted on an animal, the shattering of the lower jaw, had quite evidently induced high fever and the poor beast

had perhaps only been semi-conscious when he heard Mothi screaming in his face. He had got up quietly and staggered away, in a last effort to reach the ravine in which he knew there was water.

To make quite sure that my deductions were correct Mothi and I crossed the river into the adjoining shooting block to have a look at the ground where the fourteen buffaloes had been tied up. Here, high up in a tree, we found the machan the three guns had sat on, and the kill the tiger had been eating when fired at. From the kill a heavy blood trail led down to the river, with elephant tracks on each side of it. Leaving Mothi on the right bank I recrossed the river into my block, picked up the blood trail and the elephant tracks, and followed them for five or six hundred yards to where the blood trail led into heavy cover. At the edge of the cover the elephants had halted and, after standing about for some time, had turned to the right and gone away in the direction of Kaladhungi. I had met the returning elephants as I was starting out the previous evening to try and get a shot at the old pig, and one of the guns had asked me where I was going, and when I told him, had appeared to want to tell me something but was restrained from doing so by his companions. So, while the party of three guns went off on their elephants to the Forest Bungalow where they were staying, I had gone off on foot, without any warning, into the jungle in which they had left a wounded tiger.

The walk back to the village from where I had left Mothi was only about three miles, but it took us about as many hours to cover the distance, for Mothi was unaccountably weak and had to rest frequently. After leaving him at his house I went straight to the Forest Bungalow,

where I found the party of three packed up and on the point of leaving to catch the evening train at Haldwani. We talked on the steps of the veranda for some little time, I doing most of the talking, and when I learnt that the only reason they could not spare the time to recover the tiger they had wounded was the keeping of a social engagement, I told them that if Mothi died as a result of shock or if the tiger killed any of my tenants, they would have to face a charge of manslaughter.

The party left after my talk with them, and next morning, armed with a heavy rifle, I entered the ravine up which the tiger had gone, not with the object of recovering a trophy for others, but with the object of putting the tiger out of his misery and burning his skin. The ravine, every foot of which I knew, was the last place I would have selected in which to look for a wounded tiger. However, I searched it from top to bottom, and also the hills on either side, for the whole of that day without finding any trace of the tiger, for the blood trail had stopped shortly after he entered the ravine.

Ten days later a forest guard on his rounds came on the remains of a tiger that had been eaten by vultures. In the summer of that year Government made a rule prohibiting sitting up for tigers between the hours of sunset and sunrise, and making it incumbent on sportsmen wounding tigers to make every effort to bring the wounded animal to bag, and to make an immediate report of the occurrence to the nearest Forest Officer and police outpost.

Mothi met with his experience in December, and when we left Kaladhungi in April he appeared to be little the worse for the shock. But his luck was out, for a month later he was badly mauled by a leopard he wounded one night

in his field and followed next morning into heavy cover; and he had hardly recovered from his wounds when he had the misfortune of being responsible for the death of a cow—the greatest crime a Hindu can commit. The cow, an old and decrepit animal that had strayed in from an adjoining village, was grazing in Mothi's field, and as he attempted to drive it out it put its hoof in a deep rat-hole and broke its leg. For weeks Mothi attended assiduously to the cow as it lay in his field, but it died eventually, and the matter being too serious for the village priest to deal with, he ordered Mothi to make a pilgrimage to Hardwar. So, having borrowed money for the journey, to Hardwar Mothi went. Here to the head priest at the main temple Mothi confessed his crime, and after that dignitary had given the offence due consideration he ordered Mothi to make a donation to the temple: this would absolve him of his crime, but in order to show repentance he would have also to do penance. The priest then asked him from what acts he derived most pleasure and Mothi, being without guile, made answer that he derived most pleasure from shooting, and from eating meat. Mothi was then told by the priest that in future he must refrain from these two pleasures.

Mothi returned from his pilgrimage cleared of his crime, but burdened with a lifelong penance. His opportunities for shooting had been few, for besides having to share the muzzle-loading gun with others he had had to confine his shooting to the village boundaries, as no man in his position was permitted to shoot in Government forests; even so, Mothi had derived great pleasure from the old gun, and from the occasional shots I had permitted him—against all rules—to fire from my rifle. Hard as this half of his penance was the second half was even harder, and, moreover, it

adversely affected his health. Though his means had only allowed him to buy a small meat ration once a month, pigs and porcupines were plentiful, and deer occasionally strayed into the fields at night. It was the custom in our village, a custom to which I also adhered, for an animal shot by one to be shared by all, so Mothi had not had to depend entirely on the meat he could buy.

It was during the winter following his pilgrimage to Hardwar that Mothi developed a hacking cough. As the remedies we tried failed to give relief, I got a doctor friend who was passing through Kaladhungi to examine him, and was horrified to learn that he was suffering from tuberculosis. On the doctor's recommendation I sent Mothi to the Bhowali Sanatorium, thirty miles away. Five days later he returned with a letter from the Superintendent of the Sanatorium saying that the case was hopeless, and that for this reason the Superintendent regretted he could not admit Mothi. A medical missionary who was staying with us at the time, and who had worked for years in a sanatorium, advised us to make Mothi sleep in the open and drink a quart of milk with a few drops of paraffin in it each morning. So for the rest of that winter Mothi slept in the open, and while sitting on our veranda, smoking a cigarette and talking to me, each morning drank a quart of milk fresh from our cows.

The poor of India are fatalists, and in addition have little stamina to fight disease. Deprived of our company, though not of our help, Mothi lost hope when we left for our summer home, and died a month later.

The women of our foothills are the hardest workers in India, and the hardest working of them all was Mothi's

widow, Punwa's mother. A small compact woman, as hard as flint and a beaver for work—young enough to remarry but precluded from doing so by reasons of her caste—she bravely and resolutely faced the future, and right gallantly she fulfilled her task, ably assisted by her young children.

Of her three children, Punwa, the eldest, was now twelve, and with the assistance of neighbours was able to do the ploughing and other field jobs. Kunthi, a girl, was ten and married, and until she left the village five years later to join her husband she assisted her mother in all her thousand and one tasks, which included cooking the food and washing up the dishes; washing and mending the clothes—for Punwa's mother was very particular about her own and her children's dress, and no matter how old and patched the garments were, they always had to be clean; fetching water from the irrigation furrow or from the Boar river for domestic purposes; bringing firewood from the jungles, and grass and tender young leaves for the milch cows and their calves; weeding and cutting the crops; husking the paddy, in a hole cut in a slab of rock, with an ironshod staff that was heavy enough to tire the muscles of any man; winnowing the wheat for Punwa to take to the watermill to be ground into atta; and making frequent visits to the bazaar two miles away to drive hard bargains for the few articles of food and clothing the family could afford to buy. Sher Singh, the youngest child, was eight, and from the moment he opened his eyes at crack of dawn each morning until he closed them when the evening meal had been eaten he did everything that a boy could do. He even gave Punwa a hand with the ploughing, though he had to be helped at the end of each furrow as he was not strong enough to turn the plough.

Sher Singh, without a care in the world, was the happiest child in the village. When he could not be seen he could always be heard, for he loved to sing. The cattle—four bullocks, twelve cows, eight calves, and Lalu the bull—were his special charge, and each morning after milking the cows he released the herd from the stakes to which he had tethered them the evening before, drove them out of the shed and through a wicket in the boundary wall, and then set to to clean up the shed. It would now be time for the morning meal, and when he heard the call from his mother, or Kunthi, he would hurry home across the fields taking the milk can with him. The frugal morning meal consisted of fresh hot chapatis and dal, liberally seasoned with green chillies and salt and cooked in mustard oil. Having breakfasted, and finished any chores about the house that he was called upon to do, Sher Singh would begin his day's real work. This was to graze the cattle in the jungle, prevent them from straying, and guard them against leopards and tigers. Having collected the four bullocks and twelve cows from the open ground beyond the boundary wall, where they would be lying basking in the sun, and left Kunthi to keep an eye on the calves, this small tousle-headed boy, his axe over his shoulder and Lalu the bull following him, would drive his charges over the Boar Bridge and into the dense jungle beyond, calling to each by name.

Lalu was a young scrub bull destined to be a plough-bullock when he had run his course but who, at the time I am writing about, was free of foot and the pride of Sher Singh his foster-brother, for Lalu had shared his mother's milk with Sher Singh. Sher Singh had christened his foster-brother *Lalu*, which means red. But Lalu was not

red. He was of a light dun colour, with stronger markings on the shoulders and a dark, almost black line running down the length of his back. His horns were short, sharp, and strong, with the light and dark colourings associated with the shoe-horns that adorned dressing tables of that period.

When human beings and animals live in close association with each other under conditions in which they are daily subjected to common dangers, each infuses the other with a measure of courage and confidence which the one possesses and the other lacks. Sher Singh, whose father and grandfather had been more at home in the jungles than in the walks of men, had no fear of anything that walked, and Lalu, young and vigorous, had unbounded confidence in himself. So while Sher Singh infused Lalu with courage, Lalu in turn infused Sher Singh with confidence. In consequence Sher Singh's cattle grazed where others feared to go, and he was justly proud of the fact that they were in better condition than any others in the village, and that no leopard or tiger had ever taken toll of them.

Four miles from our village there is a valley about five miles in length, running north and south, which has no equal in beauty or richness of wild life in the five thousand square miles of forest land in the United Provinces. At the upper end of the valley a clear stream, which grows in volume as it progresses, gushes from a cave in which a python lives, from under the roots of an old jamun tree. This crystal-clear stream with its pools and runs is alive with many kinds of small fish on which live no fewer than five varieties of kingfishers. In the valley grow flowering and fruit-bearing trees and bushes that attract a multitude of nectar-drinking and fruit-eating birds and animals, which in turn attract predatory birds and carnivorous animals

which find ample cover in the dense undergrowth and matted cane-brakes. In places the set of the stream has caused miniature landslides, and on these grows a reedy kind of grass, with broad lush leaves, much fancied by sambhar and kakar.

The valley was a favourite haunt of mine. One winter evening, shortly after our descent to Kaladhungi from our summer home, I was standing at a point where there is a clear view into the valley when, in a clump of grass to the left, I saw a movement. After a long scrutiny the movement revealed itself as an animal feeding on the lush grass on a steep slope. The animal was too light for a sambhar and too big for a kakar, so I set out to stalk it, and as I did so a tiger started calling in the valley a few hundred yards lower down. My quarry also heard the tiger, and as it raised its head I saw to my surprise that it was Lalu. With head poised he stood perfectly still listening to the tiger, and when it stopped calling he unconcernedly resumed cropping the grass. This was forbidden ground for Lalu, for cattle are not permitted to graze in Government Reserved Forests, and moreover Lalu was in danger from the tiger; so I called to him by name and, after a little hesitation, he came up the steep bank and we returned to the village together. Sher Singh was tying up his cattle in the shed when we arrived, and when I told him where I had found Lalu he laughed and said, 'Don't fear for this one, Sahib. The forest guard is a friend of mine and would not impound my Lalu, and as for the tiger, Lalu is well able to take care of himself.'

Not long after this incident, the Chief Conservator of Forests, Smythies, and his wife arrived on tour in Kaladhungi, and as the camels carrying their camp equipment

were coming down the forest road towards the Boar Bridge, a tiger killed a cow on the road in front of them. On the approach of the camels, and the shouting of the men with them, the tiger left the cow on the road and bounded into the jungle. The Smythies were sitting on our veranda having morning coffee when the camel men brought word of the killing of the cow. Mrs. Smythies was keen to shoot the tiger, so I went off with two of her men to put up a machan for her, and found that in the meantime the tiger had returned and dragged the cow twenty yards into the jungle. When the machan was ready I sent back for Mrs. Smythies and, after putting her into the machan with a forest guard to keep her company, I climbed a tree on the edge of the road hoping to get a photograph of the tiger.

It was 4 p.m. We had been in position half an hour, and a kakar had just started barking in the direction in which we knew the tiger was lying up, when down the road came Lalu. On reaching the spot where the cow had been killed he very carefully smelt the ground and a big pool of blood, then turned to the edge of the road and with head held high and nose stretched out started to follow the drag. When he saw the cow he circled round her, tearing up the ground with his hoofs and snorting with rage. After tying my camera to a branch I slipped off the tree and conducted a very angry and protesting Lalu to the edge of the village. Hardly had I returned to my perch on the tree, however, when up the road came Lalu to make a second demonstration round the dead cow. Mrs. Smythies now sent the forest guard to drive Lalu away, and as the man passed me I told him to take the bull across the Boar Bridge and to remain there with the elephant that was

coming later for Mrs. Smythies. The kakar had stopped barking some time previously and a covey of jungle fowl now started cackling a few yards behind the machan. Getting my camera ready I looked towards Mrs. Smythies, and saw she had her rifle poised, and at that moment Lalu appeared for the third time. (We learnt later that, after being taken across the bridge, he had circled round, crossed the river bed lower down and disappeared into the jungle.) This time Lalu trotted up to the cow and, either seeing or smelling the tiger, lowered his head and charged into the bushes, bellowing loudly. Three times he did this, and after each charge he retreated backwards to his starting-point, slashing upwards with his horns as he did so.

I have seen buffaloes driving tigers away from their kills, and I have seen cattle doing the same with leopards but, with the exception of a Himalayan bear, I had never before seen a solitary animal—and a scrub bull at that—drive a tiger away from his kill.

Courageous as Lalu was he was no match for the tiger, who was now losing his temper and answering Lalu's bellows with angry growls. Remembering a small boy back in the village whose heart would break if anything happened to his beloved companion, I was on the point of going to Lalu's help when Mrs. Smythies very sportingly gave up her chance of shooting the tiger, so I shouted to the mahout to bring up the elephant. Lalu was very subdued as he followed me to the shed where Sher Singh was waiting to tie him up, and I think he was as relieved as I was that the tiger had not accepted his challenge while he was defending the dead cow.

The tiger fed on the cow that night and next evening, and while Mrs. Smythies was having another unsuccessful

try to get a shot at him, I took a ciné picture which some who read this story may remember having seen. In the picture the tiger is seen coming down a steep bank, and drinking at a little pool.

The jungle was Sher Singh's playground, the only playground he ever knew, just as it had been my playground as a boy, and of all whom I have known he alone enjoyed the jungles as much as I have done. Intelligent and observant, his knowledge of jungle lore was incredible. Nothing escaped his attention, and he was as fearless as the animal whose name he bore.

Our favourite evening walk was along one of the three roads which met on the far side of the Boar Bridge—the abandoned trunk road to Moradabad, the road to Kota, and the forest road to Ramnagar. Most evenings at sundown we would hear Sher Singh before we saw him, for he sang with abandon in a clear treble voice that carried far as he drove his cattle home. Always he would greet us with a smile and a salaam, and always he would have something interesting to tell us. 'The big tiger's tracks were on the road this morning coming from the direction of Kota and going towards Naya Gaon, and at midday I heard him calling at the lower end of the Dhunigad cane-brake.' 'Near Saryapani I heard the clattering of horns, so I climbed a tree and saw two chital stags fighting. One of them has very big horns, Sahib, and is very fat, and I have eaten no meat for many days.' 'What am I carrying?'—he had something wrapped in big green leaves and tied round with bark balanced on his tousled head. 'I am carrying a pig's leg. I saw some vultures on a tree, so I went to have a look and under a bush I found a pig killed by a leopard last night and partly eaten. If you want to

shoot the leopard, Sahib, I will take you to the kill.' 'To-day I found a beehive in a hollow haldu tree', he said one day, proudly exhibiting a large platter of leaves held together with long thorns on which the snow-white comb was resting. 'I have brought the honey for you.' Then, glancing at the rifle in my hands, he added, 'I will bring the honey to the house when I have finished my work for perchance you may meet a pig or a kakar and with the honey in your hands you would not be able to shoot.' The cutting of the hive out of the haldu tree with his small axe had probably taken him two hours or more, and he had got badly stung in the process, for his hands were swollen and one eye was nearly closed, but he said nothing about this and to have commented on it would have embarrassed him. Later that night, while we were having dinner, he slipped silently into the room and as he laid the brass tray, polished till it looked like gold, on our table, he touched the elbow of his right arm with the fingers of his left hand, an old hill custom denoting respect, which is fast dying out.

After depositing such a gift on the table, leaving the tray for Kunthi to call for in the morning, Sher Singh would pause at the door and, looking down and scratching the carpet with his toes, would say, 'If you are going bird shooting tomorrow I will send Kunthi out with the cattle and come with you, for I know where there are a lot of birds'. He was always shy in a house, and on these occasions spoke with a catch in his voice as though he had too many words in his mouth and was trying, with difficulty, to swallow the ones that were getting in his way.

Sher Singh was in his element on these bird shoots, which the boys of the village enjoyed as much as he and I did, for in addition to the excitement and the prospect of

having a bird to take home at the end of the day, there was always a halt at midday at a prearranged spot to which the man sent out earlier would bring the fresh sweets and parched gram that would provide a meal for all.

When I had taken my position, Sher Singh would line up his companions and beat the selected cover towards me, shouting the loudest of them all and worming his way through the thickest cover. When a bird was put up he would yell, 'It's coming, Sahib! It's coming!' Or when a heavy animal went crashing through the undergrowth, as very frequently happened, he would call to his companions not to run away, assuring them that it was only a sambhar, or a chital, or maybe a sounder of pig. Ten to twelve patches of cover would be beaten in the course of the day, yielding as many pea fowl and jungle fowl, and two or three hares, and possibly a small pig or a porcupine. At the end of the last beat the bag would be shared out among the beaters and the gun, or if the bag was small only among the beaters, and Sher Singh was never more happy than when, at the end of the day, he made for home with a peacock in full plumage proudly draped over his shoulders.

Punwa was now married, and the day was fast approaching when Sher Singh would have to leave the home, for there was not sufficient room on the small holding of six acres for the two brothers. Knowing that it would break Sher Singh's heart to leave the village and his beloved jungles, I decided to apprentice him to a friend who had a garage at Kathgodam, and who ran a fleet of cars on the Naini Tal motor road. After his training it was my intention to employ Sher Singh to drive our car and accompany me on my shooting trips during the winter, and to look after our cottage and garden at Kaladhungi while we were in

Naini Tal during the summer. Sher Singh was speechless with delight when I told him of the plans I had made for him, plans which ensured his continued residence in the village, and within sight and calling distance of the home he had never left from the day of his birth.

Plans a-many we make in life, and I am not sure there is cause for regret when some go wrong. Sher Singh was to have started his apprenticeship when we returned to Kaladhungi in November. In October he contracted malignant malaria which led to pneumonia, and a few days before we arrived he died. During his boyhood's years he had sung through life happy as the day was long and, had he lived, who can say that his life in a changing world would have been as happy, and as carefree, as those first few years?

Before leaving our home for a spell, to regain in new climes the health we lost in Hitler's war, I called together our tenants and their families as I had done on two previous occasions, to tell them the time had come for them to take over their holdings and run the village for themselves. Punwa's mother was the spokesman for the tenants on this occasion, and after I had had my say she got to her feet and, in her practical way, spoke as follows: 'You have called us away from our work to no purpose. We have told you before and we tell you again that we will not take your land from you, for to do so would imply that we were no longer your people. And now, Sahib, what about the pig, the son of the shaitan who climbed your wall and ate my potatoes? Punwa and these others cannot shoot it and I am tired of sitting up all night and beating a tin can.'

Maggie and I were walking along the fire-track that

skirts the foothills with David at our heels when the pig—worthy son of the old shaitan who, full of years and pellets of buckshot, had been killed in an all-night fight with a tiger—trotted across the track. The sun had set and the range was long—all of three hundred yards—but a shot was justifiable for the pig was quite evidently on his way to the village. I adjusted the sights and, resting the rifle against a tree, waited until the pig paused at the edge of a deep depression. When I pressed the trigger, the pig jumped into the depression, scrambled out on the far side, and made off at top speed. 'Have you missed him?' asked Maggie, and with his eyes David put the same question. There was no reason, except miscalculation of the range, why I should not have hit the pig, for my silver foresight had shown up clearly on his black skin, and the tree had assisted me to take steady aim. Anyway, it was time to make for home, and as the cattle track down which the pig had been going would lead us to the Boar Bridge we set off to see the result of my shot. The pig's feet had bitten deeply into the ground where he had taken off, and on the far side of the depression, where he had scrambled out, there was blood. Two hundred yards in the direction in which the pig had gone there was a narrow strip of dense cover. I should probably find him dead in the morning in this cover, for the blood trail was heavy; but if he was not dead and there was trouble, Maggie would not be with me, and there would be more light to shoot by in the morning than there was now.

Punwa had heard my shot and was waiting on the bridge for us. 'Yes', I said, in reply to his eager inquiry, 'it was the old pig I fired at, and judging by the blood trail, he is hit hard.' I added that if he met me on the bridge

next morning I would show him where the pig was, so that later he could take out a party of men to bring it in. 'May I bring the old havildar too?' said Punwa, and I agreed. The havildar, a kindly old man who had won the respect and affection of all, was a Gurkha who on leaving the army had joined the police, and having retired a year previously had settled down with his wife and two sons on a plot of land we had given him in our village. Like all Gurkhas the havildar had an insatiable appetite for pig's flesh, and when a pig was shot by any of us it was an understood thing that, no matter who went short, the ex-soldier-policeman must have his share.

Punwa and the havildar were waiting for me at the bridge next morning. Following the cattle track, we soon reached the spot where, the previous evening, I had seen the blood. From here we followed the well-defined blood trail which led us, as I had expected, to the dense cover. I left my companions at the edge of the cover, for a wounded pig is a dangerous animal, and with one exception—a bear—is the only animal in our jungles that has the unpleasant habit of savaging any human being who has the misfortune to be attacked and knocked down by him. For this reason wounded pigs, especially if they have big tusks, have to be treated with great respect. The pig had stopped where I had expected him to, but he had not died, and at daybreak he had got up from where he had been lying all night and left the cover. I whistled to Punwa and the havildar and when they rejoined me we set off to trail the animal.

The trail led us across the fire-track, and from the direction in which the wounded animal was going it was evident he was making for the heavy jungle on the far side of the

hill, from which I suspected he had come the previous evening. The morning blood trail was light and continued to get lighter the farther we went, until we lost it altogether in a belt of trees, the fallen leaves of which a gust of wind had disturbed. In front of us at this spot was a tinder-dry stretch of waist-high grass. Still under the conviction that the pig was heading for the heavy jungle on the far side of the hill, I entered the grass, hoping to pick up the tracks again on the far side.

The havildar had lagged some distance behind, but Punwa was immediately behind me when, after we had gone a few yards into the grass, my woollen stockings caught on the thorns of a low bush. While I was stooping to free myself Punwa, to avoid the thorns, moved a few paces to the right and I just got free and was straightening up when out of the grass shot the pig and with an angry grunt went straight for Punwa, who was wearing a white shirt. I then did what I have always asked companions who have accompanied me into the jungles after dangerous game to do if they saw me attacked by a wounded animal. I threw the muzzle of my rifle into the air, and shouted at the top of my voice as I pressed the trigger.

If the thorns had not caught in my stockings and lost me a fraction of a second, all would have been well, for I should have killed the pig before it got to Punwa; but once the pig had reached him the only thing I could do to help him was to try to cause a diversion, for to have fired in his direction would further have endangered his life. As the bullet was leaving my rifle to land in the jungle a mile away, Punwa, with a despairing scream of 'Sahib', was falling backwards into the grass with the pig right on top of him, but at my shout and the crack of the rifle the pig

turned like a whiplash straight for me, and before I was able to eject the spent cartridge and ram a fresh one into the chamber of the .275 rifle, he was at me. Taking my right hand from the rifle I stretched the arm out palm downwards, and as my hand came in contact with his forehead he stopped dead, for no other reason than that my time had not come, for he was big and angry enough to have knocked over and savaged a cart horse. The pig's body had stopped but his head was very active, and as he cut upwards with his great tusks, first on one side and then on the other, fortunately cutting only the air, he wore the skin off the palm of my hand with his rough forehead. Then, for no apparent reason, he turned away, and as he made off I put two bullets into him in quick succession and he pitched forward on his head.

After that one despairing scream Punwa had made no sound or movement, and with the awful thought of what I would say to his mother, and the still more awful thought of what she would say to me, I went with fear and trembling to where he was lying out of sight in the grass, expecting to find him ripped open from end to end. He was lying full stretch on his back, and his eyes were closed, but to my intense relief I saw no blood on his white clothes. I shook him by the shoulder and asked him how he was, and where he had been hurt. In a very weak voice he said he was dead, and that his back was broken. I straddled his body and gently raised him to a sitting position, and was overjoyed to find that he was able to retain this position when I released my hold. Passing my hand down his back I assured him that it was not broken, and after he had verified this fact with his own hand, he turned his head and looked behind him to where a dry stump was projecting

two or three inches above the ground. Evidently he had fainted when the pig knocked him over and, on coming to, feeling the stump boring into his back, had jumped to the conclusion that it was broken.

And so the old pig, son of the shaitan, died, and in dying nearly frightened the lives out of two of us. But beyond rubbing a little skin off my hand he did us no harm, for Punwa escaped without a scratch and with a grand story to tell. The havildar, like the wise old soldier he was, had remained in the background. None the less he claimed a lion's share of the pig, for had he not stood foursquare in reserve to render assistance if assistance had been called for? And further, was it not the custom for those present at a killing to receive a double share, and what difference was there between seeing and hearing the shots that had killed the pig? So a double share was not denied him, and he too, in the course of time, had a grand story to tell of the part he took in that morning's exploit.

Punwa now reigns, and is raising a family, in the house I built for his father. Kunthi has left the village to join her husband, and Sher Singh waits in the Happy Hunting Grounds. Punwa's mother is still alive, and if you stop at the village gate and walk through the fields to Punwa's house you will find her keeping house for Punwa and his family and working as hard and as cheerfully at her thousand and one tasks as she worked when she first came to our village as Mothi's bride.

During the war years Maggie spent the winters alone in our cottage at Kaladhungi, without transport, and fourteen miles from the nearest settlement. Her safety gave me no anxiety, for I knew she was safe among my friends, the poor of India.

IV

Pre-Red-Tape Days

I WAS camping with Anderson one winter in the Terai, the low-lying stretch of country at the foot of the Himalayas, and having left Bindukhera after breakfast one morning in early January, we made a wide detour to Boksar, our next camping-place, to give our servants time to pack up and pitch our tents before our arrival.

There were two small unbridged rivers to cross between Bindukhera and Boksar, and at the second of these rivers one of the camels carrying our tents slipped on the clay bottom and deposited its load in the river. This accident resulted in a long delay, with the result that we arrived at Boksar, after a very successful day's black partridge shooting, while our kit was still being unloaded from the camels.

The camp site was only a few hundred yards from Boksar village, and as Anderson's arrival was a great event, the entire population had turned out to pay their respects to him and to render what assistance they could in setting up our camp.

Sir Frederick Anderson was at that time Superintendent of the Terai and Bhabar Government Estates, and by reason of the large amount of the milk of human kindness that he was endowed with he had endeared himself to the large population, embracing all castes and creeds, living in the many thousands of square miles of country he ruled over. In addition to his kindly nature, Anderson was a great administrator and was gifted with a memory which I have only seen equalled in one other man, General Sir Henry Ramsay, who for twenty-eight years administered the

same tract of country, and who throughout his service was known as the Uncrowned King of Kumaon. Both Ramsay and Anderson were Scotsmen, and it was said of them that once having heard a name or seen a face they never forgot it. It is only those who have had dealings with simple uneducated people who can realize the value of a good memory, for nothing appeals so much to a humble man as the remembering of his name, or the circumstances in which he has previously been met.

When the history of the rise and fall of British Imperialism is written, due consideration will have to be given to the important part red tape played in the fall of the British raj. Both Ramsay and Anderson served India at a time when red tape was unknown, and their popularity and the success of their administration was in great measure due to their hands' not being tied with it.

Ramsay, in addition to being Judge of Kumaon, was also magistrate, policeman, forest officer, and engineer, and as his duties were manifold and onerous he performed many of them while walking from one camp to another. It was his custom while on these long walks, and while accompanied by a crowd of people, to try all his civil and criminal cases. The complainant and his witnesses were first heard, and then the defendant and his witnesses, and after due deliberation, Ramsay would pronounce judgment, which might be either a fine or a sentence to imprisonment. In no case was his judgment known to be questioned, nor did any man whom he had sentenced to a fine or imprisonment fail to pay the fine into the Government Treasury or fail to report himself at the nearest jail to carry out the term of simple or rigorous imprisonment to which Ramsay had sentenced him.

As Superintendent of the Terai and Bhabar, Anderson had only to perform a part of the duties that had been performed by his predecessor Ramsay, but he had wide administrative powers, and that afternoon, while our tents were being pitched on the camping ground at Boksar, Anderson told the assembled people to sit down, adding that he would listen to any complaints they had to make and receive any petitions they wished to present.

The first petition came from the headman of a village adjoining Boksar. It appeared that this village and Boksar had a joint irrigation channel that served both villages, and that ran through Boksar. Owing to the partial failure of the monsoon rains, the water in the channel had not been sufficient for both villages and Boksar village had used it all, with the result that the paddy crop of the lower village had been ruined. The headman of Boksar admitted that no water had been allowed to go down the channel to the lower village and justified his action by pointing out that, if the water had been shared, the paddy crops of both villages would have been ruined. The crop had been harvested and threshed a few days before our arrival, and after Anderson had heard what the two headmen had to say, he ordered that the paddy should be divided up according to the acreage of the two villages. The people of Boksar acknowledged the justice of this decision, but claimed they were entitled to payment of the labour that had been employed in harvesting and threshing the crop. To this claim the lower village objected on the ground that no request had been made to them for help while the Boksar crop was being harvested and threshed. Anderson upheld the objection, and while the two headmen went off to divide the paddy the next petition was presented to him.

This was from Chadi, accusing Kalu of having abducted his wife Tilni. Chadi's complaint was that three weeks previously Kalu had made advances to Tilni; that in spite of his protests Kalu had persisted in his advances; and that ultimately Tilni had left his hut and taken up residence with Kalu. When Anderson asked if Kalu was present, a man sitting at the edge of the semicircle in front of us stood up and said he was Kalu.

While the case of the paddy had been under discussion the assembled women and girls had shown little interest, for that was a matter to be decided by their menfolk. But this abduction case, judging from the expression on their faces and the sharp intakes of breath, was one in which they were all intensely interested.

When Anderson asked Kalu if he admitted the charge that Chadi had brought against him, he admitted that Tilni was living in the hut he had provided for her but he stoutly denied that he had abducted her. When asked if he was prepared to return Tilni to her lawful husband, Kalu replied that Tilni had come to him of her own free will and that he was not prepared to force her to return to Chadi. 'Is Tilni present?' asked Anderson. A girl from among the group of women came forward and said, 'I am Tilni. What does Your Honour want with me?'

Tilni was a clean-limbed attractive young girl, some eighteen years of age. Her hair, done in a foot-high cone in the traditional manner of the women of the Terai, was draped with a white-bordered black sari, her upper person was encased in a tight-fitting red bodice, and a voluminous gaily coloured skirt completed her costume. When asked by Anderson why she had left her husband, she pointed to Chadi and said, 'Look at him. Not only is he dirty, as you

can see, but he is also a miser; and during the two years I have been married to him he has not given me any clothes, nor has he given me any jewellery. These clothes that you are looking at and this jewellery', she said, touching some silver bangles on her wrists, and several strings of glass beads round her neck, 'were given to me by Kalu.' Asked if she was willing to go back to Chadi, Tilni tossed her head and said nothing would induce her to do so.

This aboriginal tribe, living in the unhealthy Terai, is renowned for two sterling qualities—cleanliness, and the independence of the women. In no other part of India are villages and the individual dwellings as spotlessly clean as they are in the Terai, and in no other part of India would a young girl have dared, or in fact been permitted, to stand before a mixed gathering including two white men to plead her own cause.

Chadi was now asked by Anderson if he had any suggestions to make, to which he replied: 'You are my mother and my father. I came to you for justice, and if Your Honour is not prepared to compel my wife to return to me, I claim compensation for her.' 'To what extent do you claim compensation for her?' asked Anderson, to which Chadi replied, 'I claim one hundred and fifty rupees'. From all sides of the semicircle there were now exclamations of 'He claims too much', 'Far too much', and 'She is not worth it'.

On being asked by Anderson if he was willing to pay one hundred and fifty rupees for Tilni, Kalu said the price demanded was excessive and added that he knew, as everyone in Boksar knew, that Chadi had only paid a hundred rupees for Tilni. This price, he argued, had been paid for Tilni when she was 'new', and as this was no

longer the case the most he was willing to pay was fifty rupees.

The assembled people now took sides, some maintaining that the sum demanded was too great, while others as vigorously maintained that the sum offered was too small. Eventually, after giving due consideration to the arguments for and against—arguments that went into very minute and very personal details, and to which Tilni listened with an amused smile on her pretty face—Anderson fixed the price of Tilni at seventy-five rupees, and this sum Kalu was ordered to pay Chadi. Opening his waistband, Kalu produced a string purse, and emptied it on the carpet at Anderson's feet. The contents amounted to fifty-two silver rupees. When two of Kalu's friends had come to his assistance and added another twenty-three rupees, Chadi was told to count the money. When he had done so and stated that the sum was correct, a woman whom I had noticed coming very slowly and apparently very painfully from the direction of the village after all the others were seated and who had sat down a little apart from the rest, got with some difficulty to her feet and said, 'What about me, Your Honour?' 'Who are you?' asked Anderson. 'I am Kalu's wife', she replied.

She was a tall gaunt woman, every drop of blood drained from her ivory-white face, her body-line distorted with an enormous spleen, and her feet swollen—the result of malaria, the scourge of the Terai.

In a tired, toneless voice the woman said that now that Kalu had purchased another wife she would be homeless; and as she had no relatives in the village, and was too ill to work, she would die of neglect and starvation. Then she covered her face with her sari and began to cry silently,

great sobs shaking her wasted frame and tears splashing down on her distorted body.

Here was an unexpected and an unfortunate complication, and one that was for Anderson difficult of solution, for while the case had been under discussion there had been no hint that Kalu already had a wife.

The uncomfortable silence following on the woman's pitiful outburst had lasted some time when Tilni, who had remained standing, ran across to the poor weeping woman, and flinging her strong young arms round her said, 'Don't cry, sister, don't cry; and don't say you are homeless, for I will share the new hut Kalu has built for me with you, and I will take care of you and nurse you and one half of all that Kalu gives me I will give you. So don't cry any more, sister, and now come with me and I will take you to our hut.'

As Tilni and the sick woman moved off, Anderson stood up and, blowing his nose violently, said the wind coming down from the hills had given him a damned cold, and that the proceedings were closed for the day. The wind coming down from the hills appeared to have affected others in the same way as it had affected Anderson, for his was not the only nose that was in urgent need of blowing. But the proceedings were not quite over, for Chadi now approached Anderson and asked for the return of his petition. Having torn his petition into small bits, Chadi took the piece of cloth in which he had tied up the seventy-five rupees from his pocket, opened it and said: 'Kalu and I be men of the same village, and as he has now two mouths to feed, one of which requires special food, he will need all his money. So permit me, Your Honour, to return this money to him.'

While touring his domain, Anderson and his predecessors in pre-red-tape days settled to the mutual satisfaction of all concerned hundreds, nay thousands, of cases similar to these, without the contestants being put to one pice of expense. Now, since the introduction of red tape, these cases are taken to courts of law where both the complainant and the defendant are bled white, and where seeds of dissension are sown that inevitably lead to more and more court cases, to the enrichment of the legal profession and the ruin of the poor, simple, honest, hardworking peasantry.

V

The Law of the Jungles

HARKWAR and Kunthi were married before their total ages had reached double figures. This was quite normal in the India of those days, and would possibly still have been so had Mahatma Gandhi and Miss Mayo never lived.

Harkwar and Kunthi lived in villages a few miles apart at the foot of the great Dunagiri mountain, and had never seen each other until the great day when, dressed in bright new clothes, they had for all too short a time been the centre of attraction of a vast crowd of relatives and friends. That day lived long in their memories as the wonderful occasion when they had been able to fill their small bellies to bursting-point with halwa and puris. The day also lived for long years in the memory of their respective fathers, for on it the village bania, who was their 'father and mother', realizing their great necessity had provided the few rupees that had enabled them to retain the respect of their community by marrying their children at the age that all children should be married, and on the propitious date selected by the priest of the village—and had made a fresh entry against their names in his register. True, the fifty per cent. interest demanded for the accommodation was excessive, but, God willing, a part of it would be paid, for there were other children yet to be married, and who but the good bania was there to help them?

Kunthi returned to her father's home after her wedding and for the next few years performed all the duties that children are called upon to perform in the homes of the

very poor. The only difference her married state made in her life was that she was no longer permitted to wear the one-piece dress that unmarried girls wear. Her new costume now consisted of three pieces, a chaddar a yard and a half long, one end of which was tucked into her skirt and the other draped over her head, a tiny sleeveless bodice, and a skirt a few inches long.

Several uneventful and carefree years went by for Kunthi until the day came when she was judged old enough to join her husband. Once again the bania came to the rescue and, arrayed in her new clothes, a very tearful girl-bride set out for the home of her boy-husband. The change from one home to another only meant for Kunthi the performing of chores for her mother-in-law which she had previously performed for her mother. There are no drones in a poor man's household in India; young and old have their allotted work to do and they do it cheerfully. Kunthi was now old enough to help with the cooking, and as soon as the morning meal had been eaten all who were capable of working for wages set out to perform their respective tasks, which, no matter how minor they were, brought grist to the family mill. Harkwar's father was a mason and was engaged on building a chapel at the American Mission School. It was Harkwar's ambition to follow in his father's profession and, until he had the strength to do so, he helped the family exchequer by carrying the materials used by his father and the other masons, earning two annas a day for his ten hours' labour. The crops on the low irrigated lands were ripening, and after Kunthi had washed and polished the metal pots and pans used for the morning meal she accompanied her mother-in-law and her numerous sisters-in-law to the fields

of the headman of the village, where with other women and girls she laboured as many hours as her husband for half the wage he received. When the day's work was done the family walked back in the twilight to the hut Harkwar's father had been permitted to build on the headman's land, and with the dry sticks the younger children had collected during their elders' absence, the evening meal was cooked and eaten. Except for the fire, there had never been any other form of illumination in the hut, and when the pots and pans had been cleaned and put away, each member of the family retired to his or her allotted place, Harkwar and his brothers sleeping with their father and Kunthi sleeping with the other female members of the family.

When Harkwar was eighteen and Kunthi sixteen, they left and, carrying their few possessions, set up home in a hut placed at their disposal by an uncle of Harkwar's in a village three miles from the cantonment of Ranikhet. A number of barracks were under construction in the cantonment and Harkwar had no difficulty in finding work as a mason; nor had Kunthi any difficulty in finding work as a labourer, carrying stones from a quarry to the site of the building.

For four years the young couple worked on the barracks at Ranikhet, and during this period Kunthi had two children. In November of the fourth year the buildings were completed and Harkwar and Kunthi had to find new work, for their savings were small and would only keep them in food for a few days.

Winter set in early that year and promised to be unusually severe. The family had no warm clothes, and after a week's unsuccessful search for work Harkwar suggested that they should migrate to the foothills where he heard a

canal headworks was being constructed. So, early in December, the family set out in high spirits on their long walk to the foothills. The distance between the village in which they had made their home for four years and the canal headworks at Kaladhungi, where they hoped to procure work, was roughly fifty miles. Sleeping under trees at night, toiling up and down steep and rough roads during the day, and carrying all their worldly possessions and the children by turns, Harkwar and Kunthi, tired and footsore, accomplished the journey to Kaladhungi in six days.

Other landless members of the depressed class had migrated earlier in the winter from the high hills to the foothills and built themselves communal huts capable of housing as many as thirty families. In these huts Harkwar and Kunthi were unable to find accommodation, so they had to build a hut for themselves. They chose a site at the edge of the forest where there was an abundant supply of fuel, within easy reach of the bazaar, and laboured early and late on a small hut of branches and leaves, for their supply of hard cash had dwindled to a few rupees and there was no friendly bania here to whom they could turn for help.

The forest at the edge of which Harkwar and Kunthi built their hut was a favourite hunting-ground of mine. I had first entered it carrying my old muzzle-loader to shoot red jungle fowl and pea fowl for the family larder, and later I had penetrated to every corner, armed with a modern rifle, in search of big game. At the time Harkwar and Kunthi and their two children, Punwa, a boy aged three, and Putali, a girl aged two, took up their residence in the hut, there were in that forest, to my certain knowledge,

five tigers; eight leopards; a family of four sloth bears; two Himalayan black bears, which had come down from the high hills to feed on wild plums and honey; a number of hyenas who had their burrows in the grasslands five miles away and who visited the forest nightly to feed on the discarded portions of the tigers' and leopards' kills; a pair of wild dogs; numerous jackals and foxes and pine martens; and a variety of civet and other cats. There were also two pythons, many kinds of snakes, crested and tawny eagles, and hundreds of vultures in the forest. I have not mentioned animals such as deer, antelope, pigs, and monkeys, which are harmless to human beings, for they have no part in my story.

The day after the flimsy hut was completed, Harkwar found work as a qualified mason on a daily wage of eight annas with the contractor who was building the canal headworks, and Kunthi purchased for two rupees a permit from the Forest Department which entitled her to cut grass on the foothills, which she sold as fodder for the cattle of the shopkeepers in the bazaar. For her bundle of green grass weighing anything up to eighty pounds and which necessitated a walk of from ten to fourteen miles, mostly up and down steep hills, Kunthi received four annas, one anna of which was taken by the man who held the Government contract for sale of grass in the bazaar. On the eight annas earned by Harkwar, plus the three annas earned by Kunthi, the family of four lived in comparative comfort, for food was plentiful and cheap and for the first time in their lives they were able to afford one meat meal a month.

Two of the three months that Harkwar and Kunthi intended spending in Kaladhungi passed very peacefully. The hours of work were long, and admitted of no relaxa-

tion, but to that they had been accustomed from childhood. The weather was perfect, the children kept in good health, and except during the first few days while the hut was being built they had never gone hungry.

The children had in the beginning been an anxiety, for they were too young to accompany Harkwar to the canal headworks, or Kunthi on her long journeys in search of grass. Then a kindly old crippled woman living in the communal hut a few hundred yards away came to the rescue by offering to keep a general eye on the children while the parents were away at work. This arrangement worked satisfactorily for two months, and each evening when Harkwar returned from the canal headworks four miles away, and Kunthi returned a little later after selling her grass in the bazaar, they found Punwa and Putali eagerly awaiting their return.

Friday was fair day in Kaladhungi and on that day everyone in the surrounding villages made it a point to visit the bazaar, where open booths were erected for the display of cheap food, fruit, and vegetables. On these fair days Harkwar and Kunthi returned from work half an hour before their usual time, for if any vegetables had been left over it was possible to buy them at a reduced price before the booths closed down for the night.

One particular Friday, when Harkwar and Kunthi returned to the hut after making their modest purchases of vegetables and a pound of goat's meat, Punwa and Putali were not at the hut to welcome them. On making inquiries from the crippled woman at the communal hut, they learned that she had not seen the children since midday. The woman suggested that they had probably gone to the bazaar to see a merry-go-round that had attracted all the

children from the communal hut, and as this seemed a reasonable explanation Harkwar set off to search the bazaar while Kunthi returned to the hut to prepare the evening meal. An hour later Harkwar returned with several men who had assisted him in his search to report that no trace of the children could be found, and that of all the people he had questioned, none admitted having seen them.

At that time a rumour was running through the length and breadth of India of the kidnapping of Hindu children by fakirs, for sale on the north-west frontier for immoral purposes. What truth there was in this rumour I am unable to say, but I had frequently read in the daily press of fakirs being manhandled, and on several occasions being rescued by the police from crowds intent on lynching them. It is safe to say that every parent in India had heard these rumours, and when Harkwar and the friends who had helped him in his search returned to the hut, they communicated their fears to Kunthi that the children had been kidnapped by fakirs, who had probably come to the fair for that purpose.

At the lower end of the village there was a police station in charge of a head constable and two constables. To this police station Harkwar and Kunthi repaired, with a growing crowd of well-wishers. The head constable was a kindly old man who had children of his own, and after he had listened sympathetically to the distracted parents' story, and recorded their statements in his diary, he said that nothing could be done that night, but that next morning he would send the town crier round to all the fifteen villages in Kaladhungi to announce the loss of the children. He then suggested that if the town crier could

announce a reward of fifty rupees, it would greatly assist in the safe return of the children. Fifty rupees! Harkwar and Kunthi were aghast at the suggestion, for they did not know there was so much money in all the world. However, when the town crier set out on his round the following morning, he was able to announce the reward, for a man in Kaladhungi who had heard of the head constable's suggestion had offered the money.

The evening meal was eaten late that night. The children's portion was laid aside, and throughout the night a small fire was kept burning, for it was bitterly cold, and at short intervals Harkwar and Kunthi went out into the night to call to their children, though they knew there was no hope of receiving an answer.

At Kaladhungi two roads cross each other at right angles, one running along the foot of the hills from Haldwani to Ramnagar, and the other running from Naini Tal to Bazpur. During that Friday night, sitting close to the small fire to keep themselves warm, Harkwar and Kunthi decided that if the children did not turn up by morning, they would go along the former road and make inquiries, as this was the most likely route for the kidnappers to have taken. At daybreak on Saturday morning they went to the police station to tell the head constable of their decision, and were instructed to lodge a report at the Haldwani and Ramnagar police stations. They were greatly heartened when the head constable told them that he was sending a letter by mail runner to no less a person than the Inspector of Police at Haldwani, requesting him to telegraph to all railway junctions to keep a look-out for the children, a description of whom he was sending with his letter.

Near sunset that evening Kunthi returned from her

twenty-eight-mile walk to Haldwani and went straight to the police station to inquire about her children and to tell the head constable that, though her quest had been fruitless, she had lodged a report as instructed at the Haldwani police station. Shortly afterwards Harkwar returned from his thirty-six-mile walk to Ramnagar, and he too went straight to the police station to make inquiries and to report that he had found no trace of the children, but had carried out the head constable's instructions. Many friends, including a number of mothers who feared for the safety of their own children, were waiting at the hut to express their sympathy for Harkwar and for Punwa's mother—for, as is the custom in India, Kunthi when she married lost the name she had been given at birth, and until Punwa was born had been addressed and referred to as 'Harkwar's wife', and after Punwa's birth as 'Punwa's mother'.

Sunday was a repetition of Saturday, with the difference that instead of going east and west, Kunthi went north to Naini Tal while Harkwar went south to Bazpur. The former covered thirty miles, and the latter thirty-two. Starting early and returning at nightfall, the distracted parents traversed many miles of rough roads through dense forests, where people do not usually go except in large parties, and where Harkwar and Kunthi would not have dreamed of going alone had not anxiety for their children overcome their fear of dacoits and of wild animals.

On that Sunday evening, weary and hungry, they returned to their hut from their fruitless visit to Naini Tal and to Bazpur, to be met by the news that the town crier's visit to the villages and the police inquiries had failed to find any trace of the children. Then they lost heart and

gave up all hope of ever seeing Punwa and Putali again. The anger of the gods, that had resulted in a fakir being able to steal their children in broad daylight, was not to be explained. Before starting on their long walk from the hills they had consulted the village priest, and he had selected the propitious day for them to set out on their journey. At every shrine they had passed they had made the requisite offering; at one place, a dry bit of wood, in another a small strip of cloth torn from the hem of Kunthi's chaddar, and in yet another a pice, which they could ill afford. And here, at Kaladhungi, every time they passed the temple that their low caste did not permit them to enter, they had never failed to raise their clasped hands in supplication. Why then had this great misfortune befallen them, who had done all that the gods demanded of them and who had never wronged any man?

Monday found the pair too dispirited and too tired to leave their hut. There was no food, and would be none until they resumed work. But of what use was it to work now, when the children for whom they had ungrudgingly laboured from morn to night were gone? So, while friends came and went, offering what sympathy they could, Harkwar sat at the door of the hut staring into a bleak and hopeless future, while Kunthi, her tears all gone, sat in a corner, hour after hour, rocking herself to and fro, to and fro.

On that Monday a man of my acquaintance was herding buffaloes in the jungle in which lived the wild animals and birds I have mentioned. He was a simple soul who had spent the greater part of his life in the jungles herding the buffaloes of the headman at Patabpur village. He knew the danger from tigers, and near sundown he collected the buffaloes and started to drive them to the village, along a

cattle track that ran through the densest part of the jungle. Presently he noticed that as each buffalo got to a certain spot in the track it turned its head to the right and stopped, until urged on by the horns of the animal following. When he got to this spot he also turned his head to the right, and in a little depression a few feet from the track saw two small children lying.

He had been in the jungle with his buffaloes when the town crier had made his round of the villages on Saturday, but that night, and the following night also, the kidnapping of Harkwar's children had been the topic of conversation round the village fire, as in fact it had been round every village fire in the whole of Kaladhungi. Here then were the missing children for whom a reward of fifty rupees had been offered. But why had they been murdered and brought to this remote spot? The children were naked, and were clasped in each other's arms. The herdsman descended into the depression and squatted down on his hunkers to determine, if he could, how the children had met their death. That the children were dead he was convinced, yet now as he sat closely scrutinizing them he suddenly saw that they were breathing; that in fact they were not dead, but sound asleep. He was a father himself, and very gently he touched the children and roused them. To touch them was a crime against his caste, for he was a Brahmin and they were low-caste children, but what mattered caste in an emergency like this? So, leaving his buffaloes to find their own way home, he picked up the children, who were too weak to walk, and set out for the Kaladhungi bazaar with one on each shoulder. The man was not too strong himself, for like all who live in the foothills he had suffered much from malaria. The children

were an awkward load and had to be held in position. Moreover, as all the cattle tracks and game paths in this jungle run from north to south, and his way lay from east to west, he had to make frequent detours to avoid impenetrable thickets and deep ravines. But he carried on manfully, resting every now and then in the course of his six-mile walk. Putali was beyond speech, but Punwa was able to talk a little and all the explanation he could give for their being in the jungle was that they had been playing and had got lost.

Harkwar was sitting at the door of his hut staring into the darkening night, in which points of light were beginning to appear as a lantern or cooking-fire was lit here and there, when he saw a small crowd of people appearing from the direction of the bazaar. At the head of the procession a man was walking, carrying something on his shoulders. From all sides people were converging on the procession and he could hear an excited murmur of 'Harkwar's children'. Harkwar's children! He could not believe his ears, and yet there appeared to be no mistake, for the procession was coming straight towards his hut.

Kunthi, having reached the limit of her misery and of her physical endurance, had fallen asleep curled up in a corner of the hut. Harkwar shook her awake and got her to the door just as the herdsman carrying Punwa and Putali reached it.

When the tearful greetings, and blessings and thanks for the rescuer, and the congratulations of friends had partly subsided, the question of the reward the herdsman had earned was mooted. To a poor man fifty rupees was wealth untold, and with it the herdsman could buy three buffaloes, or ten cows, and be independent for life. But the rescuer

was a better man than the crowd gave him credit for. The blessings and thanks that had been showered on his head that night, he said, was reward enough for him, and he stoutly refused to touch one pice of the fifty rupees. Nor would Harkwar or Kunthi accept the reward either as a gift or a loan. They had got back the children they had lost all hope of ever seeing again, and would resume work as their strength returned. In the meantime the milk and sweets and puris that one and another of the assembled people, out of the goodness of their hearts, had run to the bazaar to fetch would be amply sufficient to sustain them.

Two-year-old Putali and three-year-old Punwa were lost at midday on Friday, and were found by the herdsman at about 5 p.m. on Monday, a matter of seventy-seven hours. I have given a description of the wild life which to my knowledge was in the forest in which the children spent those seventy-seven hours, and it would be unreasonable to assume that none of the animals or birds saw, heard, or smelt the children. And yet, when the herdsman put Putali and Punwa into their parents' arms, there was not a single mark of tooth or claw on them.

I once saw a tigress stalking a month-old kid. The ground was very open and the kid saw the tigress while she was still some distance away and started bleating, whereon the tigress gave up her stalk and walked straight up to it. When the tigress had approached to within a few yards, the kid went forward to meet her, and on reaching the tigress stretched out its neck and put up its head to smell her. For the duration of a few heart beats the month-old kid and the Queen of the Forest stood nose to nose, and then the queen turned and walked off in the direction from which she had come.

When Hitler's war was nearing its end, in one week I read extracts from speeches of three of the greatest men in the British Empire, condemning war atrocities, and accusing the enemy of attempting to introduce the 'law of the jungle' into the dealings of warring man and man. Had the Creator made the same law for man as He has made for the jungle folk, there would be no wars, for the strong in man would have the same consideration for the weak as is the established law of the jungles.

VI

The Brothers

THE long years of training boys for jungle warfare were over, and we were sitting one morning after breakfast on the veranda of our cottage at Kaladhungi. My sister Maggie was knitting a khaki pullover for me, and I was putting the finishing touches to a favourite fly-rod that suffered from years of disuse, when a man wearing a clean but much-patched cotton suit walked up the steps of the veranda with a broad grin on his face, salaamed, and asked if we remembered him.

Many people, clean and not so clean, old and young, rich and poor (but mostly poor), Hindus, Mohammedans, and Christians, walked up those steps, for our cottage was at a cross-roads at the foot of the hills and on the border line between the cultivated land and the forest. All who were sick or sorry, in want of a helping hand, or in need of a little human companionship and a cup of tea, whether living on the cultivated land or working in the forest or just passing on their way from one place to another, found their way to our cottage. Had a record been maintained over the years of only the sick and injured treated, it would have had thousands of names in it. And the cases dealt with would have covered every ailment that human flesh is heir to—and subject to, when living in an unhealthy area, working in forests on dangerous jobs among animals who occasionally lose their tempers.

There was the case of the woman who came one morning and complained that her son had great difficulty in eating the linseed poultice that had been given to her the

previous evening to apply on a boil: as the poultice did not appear to have done the boy any good, she asked to have the medicine changed. And the case of the old Mohammedan woman who came late one evening, with tears streaming down her face, and begged Maggie to save her husband who was dying of pneumonia. She looked askance at the tablets of M. & B. 693 and asked if that was all that was to be given to a dying man to make him well; but next day she returned with a beaming countenance to report that her husband had recovered, and begged for the same kind of medicine for the four friends she had brought with her, each of whom had husbands as old as hers who might at any time get pneumonia. And there was the case of the girl about eight years old, who, after some difficulty in reaching the latch of the gate, marched up to the veranda firmly holding the hand of a boy some two years younger, and asked for medicine for the boy's sore eyes. She sat herself down on the ground, made the boy lie on his back, and having got his head between her knees said, 'Now, Miss Sahib, you can do anything you like to him.' This girl was the daughter of the headman of a village six miles away. Seeing her class mate suffering from sore eyes, she had taken it upon herself to bring him to Maggie for treatment, and for a whole week, until his eyes were quite well, the young Samaritan brought the boy to the cottage, though in order to do so she had to walk an additional four miles each day.

Then there was the case of the sawyer from Delhi, who limped into the compound one day with his right leg ripped open by the tusk of a pig from his heel to the back of his knee. All the time his leg was being attended to he swore at the unclean beast that had done this terrible thing

to him, for he was a follower of the Prophet. His story was that when that morning he had approached the tree he had felled the previous day, to saw it up, a pig which had been sheltering among the branches ran against him and cut his leg. When I suggested that it was his own fault for having got in the way of the pig, he indignantly exclaimed: 'With the whole jungle to run about in, what need was there for it to have run against me when I had done nothing to offend it, and in fact before I had even seen it?'

There was another sawyer too. While turning over a log he had been stung on the palm of his hand by a scorpion 'as big as this'. After treatment, he rolled on the ground loudly lamenting his fate and asserting that the medicine was doing him no good, but not long after he was observed to be holding his sides and choking with laughter. It was the day of the children's annual fête, and when the races had been run and the two hundred children and their mothers had been fed on sweets and fruit, a circle had been formed. A blindfolded boy had been set to break a paper bag containing nuts of all kinds, which was slung between two bamboos held upright by two men; and it was when the boy brought his stick down on the head of one of these men that the scorpion patient was found to be laughing the loudest of all the assembly. When asked how the pain now was, the man replied that it had gone, and that in any case he would not mind how many scorpions stung him provided he could take part in a tamasha like this.

The members of our family have been amateur physicians for more years than I can remember, and as Indians, especially the poorer ones, have long memories, and never forget a kindness no matter how trivial it may have been, not all the people who walked up the steps of our cottage

at Kaladhungi were patients. Many there were who had marched for days over rough tracks in all weathers to thank us for small kindnesses shown to them, maybe the previous year, or maybe many years previously. One of these was a sixteen-year-old boy, who with his mother had been housed for some days in our village while Maggie treated his mother for influenza and badly inflamed eyes; now he had done a march of many days to bring Maggie his mother's thanks and a present of a few pomegranates which his mother had picked for her 'with her own hand'. And only that day, an hour before the man wearing the patched suit had arrived, an old man had walked up the steps and seated himself on the veranda with his back to one of the pillars and, after looking at me for some time, had shaken his head in a disapproving manner and said, 'You are looking much older, Sahib, than you were when I last saw you.' 'Yes', I replied, 'all of us are apt to look older after ten years.' 'Not all of us, Sahib,' he rejoined, 'for I look and feel no older than when I last sat in your veranda not ten, but twelve years ago. On that occasion I was returning on foot from a pilgrimage to Badrinath, and seeing your gate open, and being tired and in urgent need of ten rupees, I asked you to let me rest for a while, and appealed to you for help. I am now returning from another pilgrimage, this time to the sacred city of Benares. I am in no need of money and have only come to thank you for the help you gave me before and to tell you that I got home safely. After this smoke, and a little rest, I shall return to rejoin my family, whom I left at Haldwani.' A fourteen-mile walk each way. And in spite of his assertion that twelve years had not made him look or feel any older, he was a frail old man.

Though the face of the man in the patched cotton suit who now stood before us on the veranda was vaguely familiar, we could not remember his name or the circumstances in which we had last seen him. Seeing that he was not recognized, the man removed his coat, opened his shirt, and exposed his chest and right shoulder. That shoulder brought him to instant memory. He was Narwa. Narwa the basket-maker, and there was some excuse for our not having recognized him, for when we had last seen him, six years previously, he was mere skin and bone; only with great difficulty had he been able to put one foot before another, and he had needed a stick to support himself. Looking now at his misshapen shoulder, the crushed and broken bones of which had calloused without being set, the puckered and discoloured skin of his chest and back, and his partially withered right arm, we who for three months had watched his gallant fight for life marvelled how well he had survived his ordeal. Moving his arm up and down, and closing and opening his hand, Narwa said that his arm was getting stronger every day. His fingers had not got stiff, as we feared they would, so he had been able to resume his trade. His object now, he said, was to show us that he was quite well and to thank Maggie—which he proceeded to do by putting his head on her feet—for having supplied all his wants, and the wants of his wife and child, during the months he had lain between life and death.

Narwa's Ordeal

Narwa and Haria were not blood brothers, though they so described themselves. They had been born and had grown up in the same village near Almora, and when

old enough to work had adopted the same profession, basket-making—which means that they were untouchables, for in the United Provinces baskets are only made by untouchables. During the summer months Narwa and Haria worked at their trade in their village near Almora, and in the winter months they came down to Kaladhungi where there was a great demand for the huge baskets, measuring up to fifteen feet in diameter, which they made for our villagers for the storage of grain. In their hill village near Almora they made their baskets of ringals—thin bamboo an inch thick and up to twenty feet long, which grows at an altitude of four to ten thousand feet, and which incidentally makes the most perfect of fly-rods—and in Kaladhungi they made them of bamboos.

The bamboos in Kaladhungi grow in the Government Reserved Forests, and we who cultivate land near the Reserved Forests are permitted to cut a certain number each year for our personal use. But people who use the bamboos for commercial purposes have to take out a licence from the forest guard of the area, paying two annas per headload, and a small consideration to the forest guard for his trouble in filling in the licence. As the licence is a personal one and covers an individual headload it is safe to assume that as many lengths of two-year-old bamboos—the age when a bamboo is best for basket-making—were included in the load as a man could carry.

At daybreak on the morning of 26 December 1939 Narwa and Haria set out from their communal hut near the bazaar at Kaladhungi to walk eight miles to Nalni village, obtain a licence from the forest guard, cut two headloads of bamboos in the Nalni Reserved Forests, and

return to Kaladhungi the same evening. It was bitterly cold when they started, so the two men wrapped coarse cotton sheets round their shoulders to keep out the cold. For a mile their way ran along the canal bank. Then, after negotiating the series of high walls which form the headworks of the canal, they took a footpath which runs alternately through patches of dense scrub jungle and over long stretches of the boulder-strewn bank of the Boar river, stretches where a pair of otters are usually to be seen in the early morning, and where, when the sun is on the water, mahseer up to three or four pounds can be taken on a fly-rod. Two miles up they crossed by a shallow ford from the right to the left bank of the river and entered a tree and grass jungle, where morning and evening are to be seen several small herds of chital and sambhar, and an occasional kakar, leopard, or tiger. A mile through this jungle, they came to where the hills converge, and where some years previously Robin picked up the tracks of the Bachelor of Powalgarh. From this point onwards the valley opens out and is known to all who graze cattle, or who poach or shoot in the area, as Samal Chour. In this valley one has to walk warily, for the footpath is used almost as much by tigers as it is by human beings.

At the upper end of the valley the footpath, before going steeply up the hill for two miles to Nalni village, passes through a strip of grass. This strip of eight-foot grass is thirty yards wide and extends for about fifty yards on either side of the path. In anticipation of the stiff climb up the Nalni hill, shortly before reaching the grass Narwa divested himself of his cotton sheet, folded it small and placed it on his right shoulder. Haria was leading, with Narwa following a few steps behind, and he had only gone

three or four yards into the grass when he heard the angry roar of a tiger, and simultaneously a shriek from Narwa. Haria turned and dashed back, and on the open ground at the edge of the grass he saw Narwa on his back with a tiger lying diagonally across him. Narwa's feet were nearest to him, and grasping an ankle in each hand he started to pull him away from under the tiger. As he did this the tiger stood up, turned towards him and started to growl. After dragging Narwa along on his back for a short distance Haria got his arms round him and set him on his feet. But Narwa was too badly injured and shaken to stand or walk, so Haria put his arms round him, and alternately dragged and carried him—while the tiger continued to growl—through the open ground skirting the grass, and so regained the path to Nalni village. By superhuman efforts Haria eventually got Narwa to Nalni, where it was found that in spite of the folded sheet which he had been carrying on his right shoulder, and which Haria had retrieved while pulling him away, the tiger had crushed the bones of the shoulder, lacerated the flesh, and exposed the bones on the right side of the chest and back. All four of the tiger's canine teeth had penetrated some eight folds of the sheet, and but for this obstruction they would have met in Narwa's chest and inflicted a fatal wound.

The forest guard and the people of Nalni were unable to do anything for Narwa, so Haria hired a pack pony for two rupees; mounted Narwa on it, and set out for Kaladhungi. The distance, as I have already said, was eight miles, but Haria was unwilling to face the tiger a second time so he made a wide detour through Musabanga village, adding ten miles to Narwa's agonizing journey. There were no saddles at Nalni and he had been mounted on a hard pack

used for carrying grain, and the first nine miles of his ride was over incredibly steep and rough ground.

Maggie was having tea on the veranda of our cottage when Narwa, soaked in blood and being held on the pony by Haria, arrived at the steps. A glance was enough to show that the case was one she could not deal with, so she quickly gave Narwa a stiff dose of sal volatile—for he was on the point of fainting—and made a sling for his arm. Then she tore up a bed sheet to be used for bandages and wrote a note to the Assistant Surgeon in charge of the Kaladhungi hospital, begging him to attend to Narwa immediately, and do all he could for him. She gave the note to our head boy and sent him to the hospital with the two men.

I was out bird shooting that day with a party of friends who were spending their Christmas holiday at Kaladhungi, and when I returned in the late evening Maggie told me about Narwa. Early next morning I was at the hospital, where I was informed by a very young and very inexperienced doctor that he had done all he could for Narwa, but as he had little hope of his recovery, and no arrangements for in-patients, he had sent Narwa home after treating him. In the large communal hut, which housed about twenty families, each of which appeared to have a record number of small children, I found Narwa lying in a corner on a bed of straw and leaves. It was the last place for a man in his terrible condition to be in, for his wounds were showing signs of getting septic. For a week Narwa lay in the corner of the noisy and insanitary hut, at times raving in high fever, at times in a state of coma, watched over by his weeping wife, and his devoted 'brother' Haria, and by other friends. It was now apparent, even

to my inexperienced eyes, that if Narwa's septic wounds were not opened up, drained, and cleaned, there was a certainty of the doctor's predictions being fulfilled, so, after making arrangements for his care while under treatment, I removed him to the hospital. To give the young doctor credit, when he undertook to do a job he did it thoroughly, and many of the long scars on his chest and back that Narwa will carry to the burning-ghat were made not by the tiger but by the doctor's lancet, which he used very freely.

With the exception of professional beggars, the poor in India can only eat when they work, and as Narwa's wife's days were fully occupied in visiting him at the hospital, and later in nursing him when he returned to the communal hut, and in caring for her three-year-old girl and her young baby, Maggie supplied all Narwa's wants,¹ and the wants of his family. Three months later, reduced to skin and bone and with a right arm that looked as though it could never be used again, Narwa crawled from the hut to our cottage to bid us goodbye and the next day he and Haria and their families set out for their village near Almora.

After visiting Narwa in the communal hut that first morning, and getting a firsthand account of the incident from Haria, I was convinced that the tiger's encounter with Narwa was accidental. However, to satisfy myself that my reconstruction of the event was right—and to shoot the tiger if I was wrong—I followed, foot by foot, the track the brothers had taken the previous day when on their way to Nalni village. For a few yards the track runs

¹ Small hospitals in India do not provide either attendants or food for patients.

along the edge of the strip of high grass at the foot of the Nalni hill, before turning at right angles to cross the grass. Shortly before the two men arrived at this spot, the tiger had killed a sambhar stag and carried it into the grass close to the right-hand side of the track. When Haria entered the grass the tiger heard the rustling, and coming out, ran into Narwa, who was a few yards behind Haria and a yard or two from the turning. The encounter was accidental, for the grass was too thick and too high for the tiger to have seen Narwa before he bumped into him. Furthermore it had made no attempt to savage Narwa, and had even allowed Haria to drag the man on whom it was lying away from under it. So the tiger was allowed to live, and was later induced to join the party of tigers that are mentioned in the chapter 'Just Tigers' in *Man-eaters of Kumaon*.

Of all the brave deeds that I have witnessed, or that I have read or heard about, I count Haria's rescue of Narwa the greatest. Unarmed and alone in a great expanse of jungle, to respond to the cry of a companion in distress and to pull that companion away from an angry tiger that was lying on him, and then to drag and carry that companion for two miles up a steep hill to a place of safety, not knowing but that the tiger was following, needed a degree of courage that is given to few, and that any man could envy. When I took down Haria's statement—which was later corroborated in every detail by Narwa—with the object, unknown to him, of his act receiving recognition, so far from thinking that he had done anything deserving of commendation, after I had finished questioning him he said: 'I have not done anything, Sahib, have I, that is likely to bring trouble on me or on my brother Narwa?'

And Narwa, a few days later, when I took down what I feared would be his dying declaration, said in a voice racked with pain and little above a whisper, 'Don't let my brother get into any trouble, Sahib, for it was not his fault that the tiger attacked me, and he risked his life to save mine'.

I should have liked to have been able to end my story by telling you that Haria's brave act, and Narwa's heroic fight for life against great odds, had been acknowledged by a certificate of merit, or some other small token of award, for both were poor men. Unfortunately red tape proved too much for me, for the Government were not willing to make any award in a case of which the truth could not be sworn to by independent and unbiased witnesses.

So one of the bravest deeds ever performed has gone unrecognized because there were no 'independent and unbiased witnesses'; and of the brothers Haria is the poorer of the two, for he has nothing to show for the part he played, while Narwa has his scars and the sheet with many holes, stained with his blood.

For many days I toyed with the idea of appealing to His Majesty the King, but with a world war starting and all it implied I very reluctantly abandoned the idea.

VII

Sultana: India's Robin Hood

IN a country as vast as India, with its great areas of forest land and bad communications, and with its teeming population chronically on the verge of starvation, it is easy to understand the temptations to embark on a life of crime, and the difficulty the Government have in rounding up criminals. In addition to the ordinary criminals to be found in all countries, there are in India whole tribes classed as criminals who are segregated in settlements set apart for them by the Government and subjected to a greater or lesser degree of restraint according to the crimes they specialize in.

While I was engaged on welfare work during a part of the last war, I frequently visited one of these criminal settlements. The inmates were not kept under close restraint, and I had many interesting talks with them and with the Government representative in charge of the settlement. In an effort to wean this tribe from a life of crime the Government had given them, free of rent, a large tract of alluvial land on the left bank of the Junna river in the Meerut District. This rich land produced bumper crops of sugarcane, wheat, barley, rape seed, and other cereals, but crime persisted. The Government representative blamed the girls, who, he said, refused to marry any but successful criminals. The tribe specialized in robbery, and there were old men in the settlement who trained the younger generation on a profit-sharing basis. Men were allowed to leave the settlement on ticket of leave for stated periods, but women were not permitted to

leave. The elders of the tribe strictly enforced three rules: first, that all robberies were to be carried out single-handed; second, that the scene of the crime was to be as distant from the settlement as possible; and third, that violence while committing the crime was not to be resorted to in any circumstances.

The method invariably adopted by a young man, after he had completed his training, was to secure employment as a house servant with a rich man in Calcutta, Bombay, or some other distant city, and when opportunity offered to rob his master of articles which could be easily secreted, such as gold, jewellery, or precious stones. On one occasion while I was paying a number of young men who had been driving black partridge out of a sugarcane field for me, the Government representative informed me that the young man into whose hands I had just dropped his wage of eight annas, plus two annas for a runner he had retrieved, had returned to the settlement a few days previously, after an absence of a year, with a diamond worth thirty thousand rupees. After valuation by the experts of the tribe the diamond had been hidden, and the most sought-after girl in the settlement had promised to marry the successful criminal during the next marriage season. Another of the men standing near by, who had not taken part in the partridge drive, had conceived the novel plan of impressing the girl of his choice by driving up to the settlement, along a most appalling cart-track, in a new motor-car he had stolen in Calcutta. In order to carry out his plan he had first had to pay for driving lessons.

Some members of criminal tribes who are not subjected to strict control find employment as night watchmen in private houses, and I know of instances where it was a

sufficient guarantee against theft for the watchman to place a pair of his shoes on the doorstep of the house in which he was employed. This may savour of blackmail, but it was cheap blackmail, for the wages paid varied from three to five rupees a month, according to the standing of the criminal, and the money was easily earned as all the watchman had to do was to place his shoes in position at night, and remove them again the next morning.

Owing to their preference for violent crime the Bhandus were one of the criminal tribes in the United Provinces that were kept under strict restraint, and Sultana, the famous dacoit who for three years defied all the Government's efforts to capture him, was a member of this tribe. It is about Sultana that this story is written.

When I first knew it, Naya Gaon was one of the most flourishing villages in the Terai and Bhabar—the tract of land running along the foothills of the Himalayas. Every yard of the rich soil, carved out of virgin forest, was under intensive cultivation, and the hundred or more tenants were prosperous, contented, and happy. Sir Henry Ramsay, the King of Kumaon, had brought these hardy people down from the Himalayas, and for a generation they retained their vigour and flourished exceedingly.

Malaria at that time was known as 'Bhabar fever', and the few doctors, scattered over a wide area, who were responsible for the health of the people, had neither the ability nor the means to cope with this scourge of the foothills. Naya Gaon, situated in the heart of the forest, was one of the first villages in the Bhabar to be decimated by the disease. Field after field went out of cultivation as the tenants died, until only a handful of the sturdy pioneers

were left, and when these survivors were given land in our village Naya Gaon reverted to jungle. Only once in later years was an attempt made to recultivate the land, the intrepid pioneer on this occasion being a doctor from the Punjab; but when first his daughter, then his wife, and finally he himself died of malaria, Naya Gaon for the second time went back to the jungle.

On the land which had been cleared with great labour, on which bumper crops of sugarcane, wheat, mustard, and rice had been grown, luxuriant grass sprang up. Attracted by this rich feed, the cattle from our village three miles away adopted the deserted fields of Naya Gaon as their regular feeding ground. When cattle graze for long periods over open ground surrounded by jungle they invariably attract carnivora, and I was not surprised to hear one year, on our descent from our summer home in Naini Tal to our winter home in Kaladhungi, that a leopard had taken up residence in the jungles adjoining the grazing-ground and that he was taking heavy toll of our cattle. There were no trees on the grassland in which I could sit over a kill, so I determined to shoot the leopard either in the early morning, when he was on his way to lie up in thick cover for the day, or in the evening, when he was returning to a kill or intent on making a fresh one. For either of these plans to be effective it was necessary to discover in what part of the surrounding jungles the leopard had made his home, so early one morning Robin and I set out to glean this information.

Naya Gaon—for though the land has been out of cultivation for many years it retains its name to this day—is bounded on the north by the road known as the Kandi Sarak, and on the east by the old Trunk Road which

before the advent of railways connected the plains of the United Provinces with the interior of Kumaon. To the south and west, Naya Gaon is bounded by dense jungle.

Both the Kandi Sarak and the Trunk Road are little used in these days and I decided to try them first before trying the more difficult ground to the south and west. At the junction of the roads, where in the days gone by a police guard was posted for the protection of wayfarers against dacoits, Robin and I found the tracks of a female leopard. This leopard was well known to Robin and me, for she had lived for several years in a heavy patch of *lantana* at the lower end of our village. Apart from never molesting our cattle, she had kept pigs and monkeys from damaging our crops, so we ignored her tracks and carried on along the Trunk Road in the direction of Garuppu. There had been no traffic on the road since the previous evening, and the tracks of animals who had used or crossed it were registered on the dusty surface.

From the rifle in my hands Robin, who was a wise dog and my constant companion, knew we were not after birds so he paid no attention to the pea fowl that occasionally scurried across the road or to the jungle fowl that were scratching up the dead leaves at the side of it, but concentrated on the tracks of a tigress and her two half-grown cubs that had gone down the road an hour ahead of us. In places the wide road was overgrown with short dub grass. On this dew-drenched grass the cubs had rolled and tumbled, and Robin filled his nostrils to his heart's content with the sweet and terrifying smell of tiger. The family had kept to the road for a mile and had then gone east along a game track. Three miles from the junction, and two miles above Garuppu, a well-used game track coming from the

direction of Naya Gaon crosses the road diagonally, and on this track we saw the fresh pug marks of a big male leopard. We had found what we were looking for. This leopard had come from the grazing ground and crossed the road. It was capable of killing a full-grown cow and there were not likely to be two leopards of this size in the same area. Robin was keen on following up the tracks, but the dense scrub jungle the leopard was making for—the same jungle in which Kunwar Singh and Har Singh had nearly lost their lives some years previously—was not suitable for stalking an animal with the sight and hearing of a leopard. Moreover, I had a better and simpler plan of making contact with the leopard, so we turned about and made for home and breakfast.

After lunch Robin and I, accompanied by Maggie, retraced our steps down the Garuppu road. The leopard had not killed any of our cattle the previous day but he might have killed a chital or a pig which shared the grazing ground with the cattle; and even if he had no kill to return to there was a very good chance of his visiting his regular hunting ground. So Maggie and I, with Robin lying between us, took up position behind a bush on the side of the road, a hundred yards from the game track along which the leopard had gone that morning. We had been in position about an hour, listening to the multitude of bird calls, when a peacock in full plumage majestically crossed the road and went down the game path. A little later, ten or a dozen chital, in the direction of the heavy jungle in which we expected the leopard to be lying up, warned the jungle folk of the presence of a leopard. Ten minutes thereafter, and a little nearer to us, a single chital repeated the warning. The leopard was on the move and

coming in our direction, and as he was making no attempt to conceal himself he was probably on his way to a kill.

Robin had lain with chin on outstretched paws without movement, listening as we were to what the jungle folk had to say, and when he saw me draw up my leg and rest the rifle on my knee, his body, which was against my left leg, started to tremble. The spotted killer whom he feared more than any other beast in the jungle would presently put its head out of the bushes and, after looking up and down the road, would come towards us. Whether it died in its tracks, or roared and tumbled about with a mortal wound, he would remain perfectly still and silent, for he was taking part in a game with every move of which he was familiar, and which was as fascinating as it was terrifying.

After going a short distance down the game path the peacock had climbed into the branches of a plum tree and was busily engaged in eating ripe fruit. Suddenly it sprang into the air with a harsh scream and alighted on the limb of a dead tree, adding its warning to that already given by the chital. A few minutes now, five at the most, for the leopard would approach the road very cautiously, and then out of the corner of my eye I caught sight of a movement far down the road. It was a man running, and every now and then, without slackening his pace, he looked over his shoulder behind him. To see a man on that road at this hour of the evening—the sun was near setting—was very unusual, and to see him alone was even more unusual. Every stride the man took lessened our chances of bagging the leopard. However, that could not be helped, for the runner was evidently in great distress, and possibly in need of help. I recognized him while he was still some distance

from us; he was a tenant in a village adjoining ours who during the winter months was engaged as herdsman at a cattle station three miles east of Garuppu. On catching sight of us the runner started violently, but when he recognized me he came towards us and in a very agitated voice said, 'Run, Sahib, run for your life! Sultana's men are after me.'

He was winded and in great distress. Taking no notice of my invitation to sit down and rest, he turned his leg and said, 'See what they have done to me! If they catch me they will surely kill me, and you also, if you do not run.' The leg he turned for our inspection was slashed from the back of the knee to the heel, and dust-clotted blood was flowing from the ugly wound. Telling the man that if he would not rest there was at least no need for him to run any more, I moved out of the bushes to where I could get a clear view down the road, while the man limped off in the direction of his village. Neither the leopard nor Sultana's men showed up, and when there was no longer light for accurate shooting, Maggie and I, with a very disgusted Robin at our heels, returned to our home at Kaladhungi.

Next morning I got the man's story. He was grazing his buffaloes between Garuppu and the cattle station when he heard a gunshot. The nephew of the headman of his village had arrived at the cattle station at dawn that morning with the object of poaching a chital, and while he had been sitting in the shade of a tree, speculating as to whether the shot had been effective or not and, if effective, whether a portion of the venison would be left at the cattle station for his evening meal, he heard a rustle behind him. Looking round, he saw five men standing over him. He was told to get up and take the party to where the gun had been fired.

When he said he had been asleep and had not heard the shot he was ordered to lead the way to the cattle station, to which they thought the gunman would probably go. The party had no firearms, but the man who appeared to be their leader had a naked sword in his hand and said he would cut the herdsman's head off with it if he attempted to run away or shout a warning.

As they made their way through the jungle the swordsman informed the herdsman that they were members of Sultana's gang and that Sultana was camped near by. When he heard the shot Sultana had ordered them to bring him the gun. Therefore if they met with any opposition at the cattle station they would burn it down and kill their guide. This threat presented my friend with a dilemma. His companions at the cattle station were a tough lot, and if they offered resistance he would undoubtedly be killed; on the other hand, if they did not resist, his crime in leading the dread Sultana's men to the station would never be forgotten or forgiven. While these unpleasant thoughts were running through his head a chital stag pursued by a pack of wild dogs came dashing through the jungle and passed within a few yards of them. Seeing that his escort had stopped and were watching the chase the herdsman dived into the high grass on the side of the path and, despite the wound he received on his leg as the swordsman tried to cut him down, he had managed to shake his pursuers off and gain the Trunk Road, where in due course he ran into us while we were waiting for the leopard.

Sultana was a member of the Bhantu criminal tribe. With the rights and wrongs of classing a tribe as 'criminal'

and confining it within the four walls of the Najibabad Fort I am not concerned. It suffices to say that Sultana, with his young wife and infant son and some hundreds of other Bhantus, was confined in the fort under the charge of the Salvation Army. Chafing at his confinement, he scaled the mud walls of the fort one night and escaped, as any young and high-spirited man would have done. This escape had been effected a year previous to the opening of my story and during that year Sultana had collected a hundred kindred spirits, all armed with guns, around him. This imposing gang, whose declared object was dacoity, led a roving life in the jungles of the Terai and Bhabar, their activities extending from Gonda in the east to Saharanpur in the west, a distance of several hundred miles, with occasional raids into the adjoining province of the Punjab.

There are many fat files in Government offices on the activities of Sultana and his gang of dacoits. I have not had access to these files, and if my story, which only deals with events in which I took part or events which came to my personal notice, differs or conflicts in any respects with Government reports I can only express my regret. At the same time I do not retract one word of my story.

I first heard of Sultana when he was camping in the Garuppu jungles a few miles from our winter home at Kaladhungi. Percy Wyndham was at that time Commissioner of Kumaon, and as the Terai and Bhabar forests in which Sultana had apparently established himself were in Wyndham's charge he asked Government for the services of Freddy Young, a keen young police officer with a few years' service in the United Provinces to his credit. The Government granted Wyndham's request, and sanctioned

the creation of a Special Dacoity Police Force of three hundred picked men. Freddy was put in supreme command of this force and given a free hand in the selection of his men. He earned a lot of unpopularity by building up his force with the best men from adjoining districts, for Sultana was a coveted prize and their own officers resented having to surrender men who might have helped them to acquire the prize.

While Freddy was mustering his force, Sultana was getting his hand in by raiding small townships in the Terai and Bhabar. Freddy's first attempt to capture Sultana was made in the forests west of Ramnagar. The Forest Department were felling a portion of these forests, employing a large labour force, and one of the contractors in charge of the labour was induced to invite Sultana, who was known to be camping in the vicinity, to a dance to be followed by a feast. Sultana and his merry men accepted the invitation, but just before the festivities began they prevailed on their host to make a slight alteration in the programme and have the feast first and the dance later. Sultana said his men would enjoy the dance more on full stomachs than on empty ones.

Here it is necessary to interrupt my story to explain for the benefit of those who have never been in the East that guests at a dance, or a 'nautch' as it is called here, do not take any part in the proceedings. The dancing is confined to a troop of professional dancing-girls and their male orchestra.

Funds in plenty were available on both sides and, as money goes as far in the East towards buying information as it does in the West, one of the first moves of the two contestants in the game that was to be played was the

organization of efficient secret services. Here Sultana had the advantage, for whereas Freddy could only reward for services rendered, Sultana could not only reward but could also punish for information withheld, or for information about his movements to the police, and when his method of dealing with offenders became known none were willing to court his displeasure.

Having known what it was to be poor, really poor, during his long years of confinement in the Najibabad Fort, Sultana had a warm corner in his heart for all poor people. It was said of him that, throughout his career as a dacoit, he never robbed a pice from a poor man, never refused an appeal for charity, and paid twice the price asked for all he purchased from small shopkeepers. Little wonder then that his intelligence staff numbered hundreds and that he knew the invitation he had received to the dance and feast had been issued at Freddy's instigation.

Meanwhile plans were on foot for the great night. The contractor, reputed to be a rich man, extended invitations to his friends in Ramnagar and in Kashipur; the best dancing-girls and their orchestras were engaged, and large quantities of eatables and drink—the latter specially for the benefit of the dacoits—were purchased and transported by bullock cart to the camp.

At the appointed time on the night that was to see the undoing of Sultana, the contractor's guests assembled and the feast began. It is possible that the contractor's friends did not know who their fellow guests were, for on these occasions the different castes sit in groups by themselves and the illumination provided by firelight and a few lanterns was of the poorest. Sultana and his men ate and drank wisely and well, and when the feast was nearing its

end the dacoit leader led his host aside, thanked him for his hospitality, and said that as he and his men had a long way to go he regretted they could not stay for the dance. Before leaving, however, he requested—and Sultana's requests were never disregarded—that the festivities should continue as had been arranged.

The principal instrument of music at a nautch is a drum, and the sound of the drums was to be Freddy's signal to leave the position he had taken up and deploy his force to surround the camp. One section of this force was led by a forest guard, and the night being dark the forest guard lost his way. This section, which was to have blocked Sultana's line of retreat, remained lost for the remainder of the night. As a matter of fact the forest guard, who had to live in the forest with Sultana and was a wise man, need not have given himself the trouble of getting lost, for by his request for a slight alteration in the programme Sultana had given himself ample time to get clear of the net before the signal was given. So all that the attacking force found when they arrived at the camp, after a long and a difficult march through dense forest, was a troop of frightened girls, their even more frightened orchestra, and the mystified friends of the contractor.

After his escape from the Ramnagar forests Sultana paid a visit to the Punjab. Here, with no forests in which to shelter, he was out of his element and after a brief stay, which yielded a hundred thousand rupees' worth of gold ornaments, he returned to the dense jungles of the United Provinces. On his way back from the Punjab he had to cross the Ganges canal, the bridges over which are spaced at intervals of four miles, and as his movements were known, the bridges he was likely to cross were heavily

guarded. Avoiding these, Sultana made for a bridge which his intelligence staff informed him was not guarded, and on his way passed close to a large village in which a band was playing Indian music. On learning from his guides that a rich man's son was being married, he ordered them to take him to the village.

The wedding party and some thousand guests were assembled on a wide open space in the centre of the village. As he entered the glare of the high-powered lamps Sultana's appearance caused a stir, but he requested the assembly to remain seated and added that if they complied with his request they had nothing to fear. He then summoned the headman of the village and the father of the bridegroom and made it known that, as this was a propitious time for the giving and receiving of gifts, he would like the headman's recently purchased gun for himself, and ten thousand rupees in cash for his men. The gun and the money were produced in the shortest time possible, and having wished the assembly good night Sultana led his men out of the village. Not till the following day did he learn that his lieutenant, Pailwan, had abducted the bride. Sultana did not approve of women being molested by his gang, so Pailwan was severely reprimanded and the girl was sent back, with a suitable present to compensate her for the inconvenience to which she had been put.

After the incident of the herdsman's slashed leg Sultana remained in our vicinity for some time. He moved camp frequently and I came upon several old sites while out shooting. It was at this time that I had a very exciting experience. One evening I shot a fine leopard on a fire-track five miles from home, and as there was not sufficient time to collect carriers to bring it in, I skinned it on the

spot and carried the skin home; but on arrival I found that I had left my favourite hunting-knife behind. Early next morning I set out to retrieve the knife and as I approached the spot where I had left it I saw the glimmer of a fire through a forest glade, some distance from the track. Reports of Sultana's presence in this forest had been coming in for some days, and on the spur of the moment I decided to investigate the fire. Heavy dew on the dead leaves made it possible to move without sound, so taking what cover was available I stalked the fire, which was burning in a little hollow, and found some twenty to twenty-five men sitting round it. Stacked upright against a nearby tree, the fire glinting on their barrels, were a number of guns. Sultana was not present, for, though I had not seen him up to that time, he had been described to me as a young man, small and trim, who invariably dressed in semi-military khaki uniform. This was evidently part of his gang, however, and what was I going to do about it? The old head constable and his equally elderly force of two constables at Kaladhungi would be of little help, and Haldwani, where there was a big concentration of police, was fifteen miles away.

While I was considering my next move, I heard one of the men say it was time to be going. Fearing that if I now tried to retreat I should be seen, and trouble might follow, I took a few rapid steps forward and got between the men and their guns. As I did so a ring of surprised faces looked up at me, for I was on slightly higher ground. When I asked them what they were doing here the men looked at each other, and the first to recover from his surprise said, 'Nothing'. In reply to further questions I was told that they were charcoal burners who had come from Bareilly

and had lost their way. I then turned and looked towards the tree, and found that what I had taken to be gun barrels were stacked axes, the handles of which, polished by long and hard use, had reflected the firelight. Telling the men that my feet were wet and cold I joined their circle, and after we had smoked my cigarettes and talked of many things, I directed them to the charcoal-burners' camp they were looking for, recovered my knife, and returned home.

In times of sustained excitement imagination is apt to play queer tricks. Sitting on the ground near a sambhar killed by a tiger I have heard the tiger coming and coming, and getting no nearer, and when the tension had become unbearable have turned round with finger on trigger to find a caterpillar biting minute bits out of a crisp leaf near my head. Again, when the light was fading and the time had come for the tiger to return to his kill, out of the corner of my eye I have seen a large animal appear; and as I was gripping my rifle and preparing for a shot an ant had crawled out on a dry twig a few inches from my face. With my thoughts on Sultana the glint of firelight on the polished axe-handles had converted them into gun barrels, and I never looked at them again until the men had convinced me they were charcoal burners.

With his efficient organization and better means of transport, Freddy was beginning to exert pressure on Sultana, and to ease the strain the dacoit leader took his gang, by this time considerably reduced by desertion and capture, to Pilibhit on the eastern border of the district. Here he remained for a few months, raiding as far afield as Gorakhpur and building up his store of gold. On his

return to the forests in our vicinity he learned that a very rich dancing-girl from the State of Rampur had recently taken up residence with the headman of Lamachour, a village seven miles from our home. Anticipating a raid, the headman provided himself with a guard of thirty of his tenants. The guard was not armed, and when Sultana arrived, before his men were able to surround the house the dancing-girl slipped through a back door and escaped into the night with all her jewellery. The headman and his tenants were rounded up in the courtyard, and when they denied all knowledge of the girl orders were given to tie them up and beat them to refresh their memories. To this order one of the tenants raised an objection. He said Sultana could do what he liked to him and his fellow tenants, but that he had no right to disgrace the headman by having him tied up and beaten. He was ordered to keep his mouth shut, but as one of the dacoits advanced towards the headman with a length of rope this intrepid man pulled a length of bamboo out of a lean-to and dashed at the dacoit. He was shot through the chest by one of the gang, but fearing the shot would arouse armed men in neighbouring villages Sultana beat a hasty retreat, taking with him a horse which the headman had recently purchased.

I heard of the murder of the brave tenant next morning and sent one of my men to Lamachour to inquire what family the dead man had left, and I sent another man with an open letter to all the headmen of the surrounding villages to ask if they would join in raising a fund for the support of his family. The response to my appeal was as generous as I expected it to be, for the poor are always generous, but the fund was never raised, for the man who had given his life for his master came from Nepal twenty

years previously, and neither his friends nor the inquiries I made in Nepal revealed that he had a wife or children.

It was after the incident just related that I accepted Freddy's invitation to take a hand in rounding up Sultana, and a month later I joined him at his headquarters at Hardwar. During his eighteen years as Collector of Mirzapur Wyndham had employed ten Koles and ten Bhunyas from the tribes living in the Mirzapur forests to assist him in tiger shooting, and the four best of these men, who were old friends of mine, were now placed by Wyndham at Freddy's disposal and I found them waiting for me at Hardwar. Freddy's plan was for my four friends and myself to track down Sultana, and when we had done this, to lead his force to a convenient place from which to launch his attack. Both these operations, for reasons already given, were to be carried out at night. But Sultana was restless. Perhaps it was just nervousness, or he may have had forewarning of Freddy's plans; anyway he never stayed for more than a day in any one place, and he moved his force long distances at night.

The weather was intensely hot and eventually, tired of inaction, the four men and I held a council of war the result of which was that after dinner that night, when Freddy was comfortably seated in a cool part of the veranda where there was no possibility of our being overheard, I put the following proposal before him. He was to let it be known that Wyndham had recalled his men for a tiger shoot, to which I had been invited, and was to have tickets to Haldwani purchased for us and see us off from the Hardwar station by the night train. At the first stop the train made, however, the four men, armed with guns provided by Freddy, and I with my own rifle were to leave

the train. Thereafter we were to have a free hand to bring in Sultana, dead or alive, as opportunity offered.

Freddy sat for a long time with his eyes closed after hearing my proposal—he weighed 20 stone 4 pounds and was apt to doze after dinner—but he was not asleep, for he suddenly sat up and in a very decided voice said, ‘No. I am responsible for your lives, and I won’t sanction this mad scheme’. Arguing with him was of no avail, so the next morning the four men and I left for our respective homes. I was wrong to have made the proposal, and Freddy was right in turning it down. The four men and I had no official standing, and had trouble resulted from our attempt to capture Sultana our action could not have been justified. For the rest, neither Sultana’s life nor ours was in any danger, for we had agreed that if Sultana could not be taken alive he would not be taken at all, and we were quite capable of looking after ourselves.

Three months later, when the monsoon was in full blast, Freddy asked Herbert of the Forest Department, Fred Anderson, Superintendent of the Terai and Bhabar, and myself, to join him at Hardwar. On arrival we learnt that Freddy had located Sultana’s permanent camp in the heart of the Najibabad jungles, and he wanted us to assist him in surrounding the camp, and to cut off Sultana’s retreat if he slipped out of the ring. Herbert, a famous polo player, was to be put in command of the fifty mounted men who were to prevent Sultana’s escape, while Anderson and I were to accompany Freddy and help him to form the ring.

By this time Freddy had no illusions about the efficiency of Sultana’s intelligence service, and with the exception of Freddy’s two assistants, and the three of us, no one knew of

the contemplated raid. Each evening the police force, fully armed, were sent out on a long route march, while the four of us went out for an equally long walk, returning after dark to the Dam Bungalow in which we were staying. On the appointed night, instead of marching over the level crossing as they had been wont to do, the route marchers went through the Hardwar goods yard to a siding in which a rake of wagons, with engine and brake-van attached, was standing with doors open on the side away from the station buildings. The last of the doors was being shut as we arrived, and the moment we had climbed into the guard’s van the train, without any warning whistles, started. Everything that could be done to allay suspicion had been done, even to the cooking of the men’s food in their lines and to the laying of our table for dinner. We had started an hour after dark. At 9 p.m. the train drew up between two stations in the heart of the jungle and the order was passed from wagon to wagon for the force to detrain, and as soon as this order had been carried out the train steamed on.

Of Freddy’s force of three hundred men, the fifty to be led by Herbert—who served in France in the First World War with the Indian cavalry—had been sent out the previous night with instructions to make a wide detour to where their mounts were waiting for them, while the main force of two hundred and fifty men with Freddy and Anderson in the lead, and myself bringing up the rear, set off for a destination which was said to be some twenty miles away. Heavy clouds had been banking up all day and when we left the train it was raining in torrents. Our direction was north for a mile, then east for two miles, again north for a mile, then west for two miles, and finally

again north. I knew the changes in direction were being made to avoid villages in which there were men in Sultana's pay, and the fact that not a village pye, the best watchdog in the world, barked at us testifies to the skill with which the manœuvre was carried out. Hour after hour I plodded on, in drenching rain, in the wake of two hundred and fifty heavy men who had left potholes in the soft ground into which I floundered up to my knees at every second step. For miles we went through elephant grass higher than my head, and balancing on the pitted and slippery ground became more difficult from the necessity of using one hand to shield my eyes from the stiff razor-edged grass. I had often marvelled at Freddy's 20 stone 4 pounds of energy, but never as I did that night. True, he was walking on comparatively firm ground while I was walking in a bog; yet even so he was carrying nine stone more than I, and the line moved on with never a halt.

We had started at 9 p.m. At 2 a.m. I sent a verbal message up the line to ask Freddy if we were going in the right direction. I sent this message because for an hour we had left our original direction northwards, and had been going east. After a long interval word came back that the Captain Sahib said it was all right. After another two hours, through thick tree and scrub jungle or across patches of high grass, I sent a second message to Freddy asking him to halt the line as I was coming up to speak to him. Silence had been enjoined before starting, and as I made my way to the front I passed a very quiet and weary line of men, some of them sitting on the wet ground and others leaning against trees.

I found Freddy and Anderson with their four guides at the head of the column. When Freddy asked if anything

was wrong—this I knew referred to stragglers—I said all was well with the men but otherwise everything was wrong, for we were walking in circles. Having lived so much of my life in jungles in which it is very easy to get lost I have acquired a sense of direction which functions as well by night as it does by day. Our change of direction when we first started had been as evident to me as it had been two hours back when we changed direction from north to east. In addition, an hour previously I had noted that we passed under a simul tree with a vulture's nest in it, and when I sent my message to Freddy to halt the line I was again under the same tree.

Of the four guides, two were Bhandus of Sultana's gang who had been captured a few days previously in the Hardwar bazaar, and on whose information the present raid had been organized. These two men had lived off and on for two years in Sultana's camp and had been promised their freedom for this night's work. The other two were cattle men who had grazed their cattle in these jungles all their lives, and who daily supplied Sultana with milk. All four men stoutly denied having lost their way, but on being pressed, they hesitated, and finally admitted that they would feel happier about the direction in which they were leading the force if they could see the hills. To see the hills, possibly thirty miles away, on a dark night with thick fog descending down to tree-top level, was impossible, so here was a check which threatened to ruin all Freddy's well-laid plans and, what was even worse, to give Sultana the laugh on us.

Our intention had been a surprise attack on the camp, and in order to accomplish this it was necessary to get within striking distance while it was still dark. The guides

had informed us that it was not possible to approach the camp in daylight from the side we had chosen without being seen by two guards who were constantly on watch from a machan in a high tree which overlooked a wide stretch of grass to the south of the camp.

With our guides now freely admitting they had lost their way, only another hour of darkness left and, worst of all, without knowing how far we were from the camp or in which direction it lay, our chance of a surprise attack was receding with every minute that passed. Then a way out of the dilemma occurred to me. I asked the four men if there was any feature, such as a stream or a well-defined cattle-track, in the direction in which we had originally started, by which they could regain direction, and when they replied that there was an old and well-defined cart-track a mile to the south of the camp, I obtained Freddy's permission to take the lead. I set off at a fast pace in a direction which all who were following me were, I am sure, convinced would lead back to the railway line we had left seven hours earlier.

The rain had stopped, a fresh breeze had cleared the sky of clouds, and it was just getting light in the east when I stumbled into a deep cart-rut. Here was the disused track the guides had mentioned, and their joy on seeing it confirmed the opinion I had formed earlier, that losing themselves in the jungle had not been intentional. Taking over the lead again, the men led us along the track for a mile to where a well-used game-track crossed it. Half a mile up the game-track we came to a deep and sluggish stream some thirty feet wide which I was glad to see the track did not cross, for I am terrified of these Terai streams, on the banks and in the depths of which I have seen huge

pythons lurking. The track skirted the right bank of the stream, through shoulder-high grass, and after going along it for a few hundred yards the men slowed down. From the way they kept looking to the left I concluded we were getting within sight of the machan, for it was now full daylight with the sun touching the tops of the trees. Presently the leading man crouched down, and when his companions had done the same, he beckoned us to approach.

After signalling to the line to halt and sit down, Freddy, Anderson, and I crept up to the leading guide. Lying beside him and looking through the grass in the direction in which he was pointing we saw a machan, built in the upper branches of a big tree, between thirty and forty feet above ground. On the machan, with the level sun shining on them, were two men, one sitting with his right shoulder towards us smoking a hookah, and the other lying on his back with his knees drawn up. The tree in which the machan was built was growing on the border of the tree and grass jungle and overlooked a wide expanse of open ground. Sultana's camp, the guides said, was three hundred yards inside the tree jungle.

A few feet from where we were lying was a strip of short grass twenty yards wide, running from the stream on our right far out on to the open ground. To retreat a little, cross the stream, and recross it opposite Sultana's camp was the obvious thing to do, but the guides said this would not be possible; not only was the stream too deep to wade, but there was quicksand along the far bank. There remained the doubtful possibility of getting the whole force across the strip of short grass without being seen by the two guards, either of whom might at any moment look in our direction.

Freddy had a service revolver, Anderson was unarmed, and I was the only one in the whole force who was carrying a rifle—the police were armed with 12-bore muskets using buckshot, with an effective range of from sixty to eighty yards. I was therefore the only one of the party who could deal with the two guards from our present position. The rifle shots would, of course, be heard in the camp, but the two Bhantus with us were of the opinion that when the guards did not return to the camp to report, men would be sent out to make inquiries. They thought that while this was being done it would be possible for us to encircle the camp.

The two men on the machan were outlaws, and quite possibly murderers to boot, and with the rifle in my hands I could have shot the hookah out of the smoker's hands and the heel off the other man's shoe without injury to either. But to shoot the men in cold, or in any other temperature of blood, was beyond my powers. So I made the following alternative suggestion: that Freddy give me permission to stalk the men—which would be quite easy, for the tall grass and tree jungle extended right up to the tree in which the machan was built and was soaking wet after the all-night rain—and occupy the machan with them while Freddy and his men carried on with their job. At first Freddy demurred, for there were two guns on the machan within easy reach of the men's hands, but eventually he consented and without further ado I slipped across the open ground and set off, for the Bhantus said the time was approaching for the guards to be changed.

I had covered about a third of the way to the tree when I heard a noise behind and saw Anderson hurrying after me. What Anderson had said to Freddy, or Freddy had said to

Anderson I do not know—both were my very good friends. Anyway, Anderson was determined to accompany me. He admitted he could not get through the jungle silently; that there was a good chance of the men on the machan hearing and seeing us; that we might run into the relief guard or find additional guards at the foot of the tree; that being unarmed he would not be able to defend himself, nevertheless and notwithstanding, *he was not going to let me go alone*. When a man from across the Clyde digs his toes in he is more stubborn than a mule. In desperation I started to retrace my steps to solicit Freddy's help. But Freddy in the meantime had had time to regret his sanction (I learnt later the Bhantus had informed him the men on the machan were very good shots), and when he saw us returning he gave the signal for the line to advance.

Fifty or more men had crossed the open strip of ground and we who were in advance were within two hundred yards of the camp when a zealous young constable, catching sight of the machan, fired off his musket. The two men on the machan were down the ladder in a flash. They mounted the horses that were tethered at the foot of the tree and raced for the camp. There was now no longer any necessity for silence, and in a voice that did not need the aid of a megaphone, Freddy gave the order to charge. In a solid line we swept down on the camp, to find it deserted.

The camp was on a little knoll and consisted of three tents and a grass hut used as a kitchen. One of the tents was a store and was stacked with sacks of atta, rice, dal, sugar, tins of ghee, two pyramids of boxes containing some thousands of rounds of 12-bore ammunition, and eleven guns in gun cases. The other two tents were sleeping-places and were strewn with blankets and a medley of articles of

clothing. Hanging from branches near the kitchen were three flayed goats.

In the confusion following the arrival in camp of the two guards it was possible that some of the partly clothed gang had taken shelter in the high grass surrounding the camp, so orders were given to our men to make a long line, our intention being to beat a wide strip of jungle in the direction in which Herbert and his mounted men were on guard. While the line was being formed I made a cast round the knoll. Having found the tracks of ten or a dozen bare-footed men in a nullah close to the camp, I suggested to Freddy that we should follow them and see where they led to. The nullah was fifteen feet wide and five feet deep, and Freddy, Anderson, and I had proceeded along it for about two hundred yards when we came on an outcrop of gravel, where I lost the tracks. Beyond the gravel the nullah opened out and on the left bank, near where we were standing, was a giant banyan tree with multiple stems. With its forest of stems, and branches sweeping down to the ground, this tree appeared to me to be an ideal place for anyone to hide in, so going to the bank, which at this point was as high as my chin, I attempted to climb up. There was no handhold on the bank and each time I kicked a hole in the soft earth the foothold gave way, and I was just contemplating going forward and getting on to the bank where the nullah flattened out, when a fusillade of shots followed by shouting broke out in the direction of the camp. We dashed back the way we had come and near the camp found a Havildar shot through the chest, and near him a dacoit, with a wisp of cloth round his loins, shot through both legs. The Havildar was sitting on the ground with his back to a tree; his shirt was open, and on the nipple of his left breast

there was a spot of blood. Freddy produced a flask and put it to the Havildar's lips, but the man shook his head and put the flask aside, saying, 'It is wine. I cannot drink it'. When pressed he added, 'All my life I have been an abstainer, and I cannot go to my Creator with wine on my lips. I am thirsty and crave a little water'. His brother was standing near by. Someone gave him a hat and he dashed off to the stream that had hampered our movements, and returned in a few minutes with some dirty water which the wounded man drank eagerly. The wound had been made by a pellet of shot and when I could not feel it under the skin I said, 'Keep a strong heart, Havildar Sahib, and the doctor at Najibabad will make you well'. Smiling up at me he replied, 'I will keep a strong heart, Sahib; but no doctor can make me well'.

The dacoit had no inhibitions about 'wine,' and in a few gulps he emptied the contents of the flask of which he was in great need, for he had been shot with a 12-bore musket at very short range.

Two stretchers were improvised from material taken from Sultana's camp, and willing hands—for no distinction was made between the high-caste member of the police force and the low-caste dacoit—took them up. With spare runners running alongside, the stretchers set off through the jungle for the Najibabad hospital twelve miles away. The dacoit died of loss of blood and of shock on the way, and the Havildar died a few minutes after being admitted to the hospital.

The beat was abandoned. Herbert did not come into the picture, for Sultana had been warned of the concentration of horse and none of the dacoits tried to cross the line he was guarding. So the sum total of our carefully planned

raid, which had miscarried through no one's fault, was Sultana's entire camp less a few guns, and two dead men. One a poor man, who, chafing at confinement, had sought liberty and adopted the only means of livelihood open to him and who would be mourned by a widow in the Najibabad fort. And the other a man respected by his superiors and loved by his men, whose widow would be cared for, and who had bravely died for a principle—for the 'wine' with which he refused to defile his lips would have sustained him until he had been laid on the operating table.

Three days after the raid Freddy received a letter from the dacoit leader in which Sultana regretted that a shortage of arms and ammunition in the police force had necessitated a raid on his camp, and stating that if in future Freddy would let him know his requirements he, Sultana, would be very glad to supply him.

The supply of arms and ammunition to Sultana was a very sore point with Freddy. Stringent orders on the subject had been issued, but it was not surprising that every licensed dealer and every licensed gun-holder in the area in which Sultana was operating was willing to risk the Government's displeasure when the alternative was the certainty of having his house raided, and the possibility of having his throat cut, if he refused Sultana's demands. So the offer of arms and ammunition was no idle one and it was the most unkind cut the dacoit leader could have delivered to the head of the Special Dacoity Police Force.

With his hide-out gone, harried from end to end of the Terai and Bhabar, and with his gang reduced to forty—all well armed, for the dacoits had soon replaced the arms

and ammunition taken from them—Freddy thought the time had now come for Sultana to surrender. So, after obtaining Government sanction—which was given on the understanding that he personally accepted full responsibility—he invited Sultana to a meeting, whenever and wherever convenient. Sultana accepted the invitation, named the time, date, and place, and stipulated that both should attend the meeting alone and unarmed. On the appointed day, as Freddy stepped out on one side of a wide open glade, in the centre of which a solitary tree was growing, Sultana stepped out on the other side. Their meeting was friendly, as all who have lived in the East would have expected it to be, and when they had seated themselves in the shade of the tree—one a mountain of energy and good humour with the authority of the Government behind him, and the other a dapper little man with a price on his head—Sultana produced a water melon which he smilingly said Freddy could partake of without reservation. The meeting ended in a deadlock, however, for Sultana refused to accept Freddy's terms of unconditional surrender. It was at this meeting that Sultana begged Freddy not to take undue risks. On the day of the raid, he said, he with ten of his men, all fully armed, had taken cover under a banyan tree and had watched Freddy and two other sahibs coming down the nullah towards the tree. 'Had the sahib who was trying to climb the bank succeeded in doing so', Sultana added, 'it would have been necessary to shoot the three of you.'

The final round of the heavy-light-weight contest was now to be staged, and Freddy invited Wyndham and myself to Hardwar to witness and take part in it. Sultana and the remnants of his gang, now weary of movement,

had taken up residence at a cattle station in the heart of the Najibabad jungles, and Freddy's plan was to convey his entire force down the Ganges in boats, land at a convenient spot, and surround the cattle station. This raid, like the one already described, was to take place at night. But on this occasion the raid had been timed for the full moon.

On the day chosen, the entire force of three hundred men, with the addition of Freddy's cousin, Wyndham, and myself, embarked as night was falling in ten country boats which had been assembled at a secluded spot on the right bank of the Ganges, a few miles below Hardwar. I was in the leading boat, and all went well until we crossed to the left bank and entered a side channel. The passage down this channel was one of the most terrifying experiences, off dry land, that I have ever had. For a few hundred yards the boat glided over a wide expanse of moonlit water without a ripple on its surface to distort the reflection of the trees on the margin. Gradually the channel narrowed and the speed of the boat increased, and at the same time we heard the distant sound of rushing water. I have often fished in these side channels of the Ganges, for they are preferred to the main stream by fish, and I marvelled at the courage of the boatmen who were willing to risk their lives and their craft in the rapids we were fast approaching. The boat, like the other nine, was an open cargo freighter eminently suitable for work on the open Ganges, but here in this narrow swift-flowing channel she was just an unmanageable hulk, which threatened to become a wreck every time her bottom planks came in violent contact with submerged boulders. The urgent call of the captain to his crew to fend the boat off the rocky banks and keep her in

the middle of the stream, or she would founder, did nothing to allay my fears, for at the time the warning was given the boat was drifting sideways and threatening to break up or capsize every time she struck the bottom. But nightmares cannot last for ever. Though the one that night was long-drawn-out, for we had twenty miles to go, mostly through broken water, it ended when one of the boatmen sprang ashore on the left bank with one end of a long rope and made it fast to a tree. Boat after boat passed us and tied up lower down, until all ten had been accounted for.

The force was disembarked on a sandy beach and when cuts and abrasions resulting from contact with the rough timbers of the boats had been attended to, and the boatmen had been instructed to take their craft five miles farther down stream and await orders, we set off in single file to battle our way through half a mile of the heaviest elephant grass I have ever tried to penetrate on foot. The grass was ten to twelve feet high and was weighted down with river fog and dew, and before we had gone a hundred yards we were wet to the skin. When we eventually arrived on the far side we were faced with a wide expanse of water which we took to be an old bed of the Ganges, and scouting parties were sent right and left to find the shortest way round the obstruction. The party that had gone to the right returned first and reported that a quarter of a mile from where we were standing the 'lake' narrowed, and that from this point to the junction of the channel down which we had come there was a swift-flowing river. Soon after the other party returned and reported that there was an unfordable river flowing into the upper end of the lake. It was now quite evident that our boatmen, intentionally or accidentally, had marooned us on an island.

With our boats gone and daylight not far off it was necessary to do something, so we moved down to the lower end of the wide expanse of water to see if we could effect a crossing between it and the junction of the two channels. Where the water narrowed and the toe or draw of the stream started, there appeared to be a possible crossing; above this point the water was twenty feet deep, and below it was a raging torrent. While the rest of us were looking at the fast-flowing water and speculating as to whether anyone would be able to cross it, Wyndham was divesting himself of his clothes. When I remarked that this was an unnecessary proceeding in view of the fact that he was already wet to the skin, he replied that he was not thinking of his clothes, but of his life. When he had taken off every stitch of clothing he tied it into a bundle, using his shirt for the purpose, and placed the bundle firmly on his head, caught the arm of a strapping young constable standing near by and said, 'Come with me'. The young man was so taken aback at being selected to have the honour of drowning with the Commissioner Sahib that he said nothing, and together, with linked arms, the two stepped into the water.

I do not think any of us breathed while we watched that crossing. With the water at times round their waists, and at times up to their armpits, it seemed impossible for them to avoid being carried off their feet and swept into the raging torrent below where no man, no matter how good a swimmer he was, could have lived. Steadily the two brave men, one the oldest in the party and the other possibly the youngest, fought their way on and when at last they struggled out on the far bank a sigh of relief went up from the spectators, which would have been a cheer audible in

Hardwar, twenty miles away, had silence not been imposed on us. Where two men could go three hundred could follow, so a chain was made; and though individual links were at times swept off their feet, the chain held, and the whole force landed safely on the far side. Here we were met by one of Freddy's most trusted informers who, pointing to the rising sun, said we had come too late; that it would not be possible for such a large force to cross the open ground between us and the forest without being seen by the herdsmen in the area, and that therefore the only thing for us to do was to go back to the island. So back to the island we went, the crossing from this side not being as bad as it had been from the other.

Back in the elephant grass our first concern was to dry our clothes. This was soon accomplished, for the sun was by now hot, and when we were once again dry and warm Freddy, from his capacious haversack, produced a chicken and a loaf of bread which were no less welcome for having been immersed in the cold waters of the Ganges. I have the ability to sleep anywhere and at any time, and, having found a sandy hollow, most of the day had passed when I was awakened by violent sneezing. On joining my companions I found that all three of them were suffering from varying degrees of hay fever. The grass we were in was of the plumed variety and when we had passed through it in the early morning the plumes had been wet. But now, in the hot sun, the plumes had fluffed out and while moving about and trying to find cool places to rest in my companions had shaken the pollen down, with the result that they had given themselves hay fever. Indians do not get hay fever and I myself have never had it. This was the first time I had ever seen anyone suffering from it, and what

I saw alarmed me. Freddy's cousin—a planter on holiday from Bengal—was the worst of the three; his eyes were streaming and swollen to the extent that he could not see, and his nose was running. Freddy could see a little but he could not stop sneezing, and when Freddy sneezed the earth shook. Wyndham, tough old campaigner that he was, while protesting that he was quite all right, was unable to keep his handkerchief away from his nose and eyes. It was bad enough being thrown about in an open boat, marooned on a desert island, and fording raging torrents; but here was the climax. To lead three men who threatened to go blind back to Hardwar at the head of the three hundred policemen was a prospect that made me feel colder than I had felt when crossing the ice-cold waters of the Ganges. As evening closed in the condition of the sufferers improved, much to my relief, and by the time we had crossed the ford for the third time Freddy and Wyndham were all right and the cousin had regained his sight to the extent that it was no longer necessary to tell him when to raise his foot to avoid a stone.

Freddy's informer and a guide were waiting for us and led us over the open ground to the mouth of a dry watercourse about a hundred yards wide. The moon had just risen and visibility was nearly as good as in sunlight when, rounding a bend, we came face to face with an elephant. We had heard there was a rogue elephant in this area, and here he was, tusks flashing in the moonlight, ears spread out, and emitting loud squeals. The guide did nothing to improve the situation by stating that the elephant was very bad tempered, that he had killed many people, and that he was sure to kill a number of us. At first it appeared that the rogue was going to make good the guide's predictions,

for with trunk raised high he advanced a few yards. Then he swung round and dashed up the bank, trumpeting defiance as he gained the shelter of the jungle. Another mile up the watercourse and we came on what the guide said was a fire-track. Here the going was very pleasant, for with short green grass underfoot, and the moonlight glinting on every leaf and blade, it was possible to forget our errand and revel in the beauty of the jungle. As we approached a stretch of burnt grass where an old peacock, perched high on a leafless tree, was sending his warning cry into the night, two leopards stepped out on the track, saw us, and gracefully bounded away and faded out of sight in the shadows. I had been out of my element during the long passage down the side channel, but now, what with the elephant—who was, I knew, only curious and intended us no harm—and then the peacock warning the jungle folk of the presence of danger, and finally the leopards merging into the shadows, I was back on familiar ground, ground that I loved and understood.

Leaving the track, which ran from east to west, the guide led us north for a mile or more through scrub and tree jungle to the bank of a tiny stream overhung by a giant banyan tree. Here we were told to sit down and wait, while the guide went forward to confer with his brother at the cattle station. A long and weary wait it was, which was in no way relieved by pangs of hunger, for we had eaten nothing since our meal off the chicken and loaf of bread, and it was now past midnight; and to make matters worse I, the only one who smoked, had exhausted my supply of cigarettes. The guide returned towards the early hours of the morning and reported that Sultana and the remnants of his gang, now reduced to nine, had left the cattle station

the previous evening to raid a village in the direction of Hardwar and that they were expected back that night, or the following day. Before leaving to try to get us a little food, of which we were in urgent need, the guide and the informer warned us that we were in Sultana's territory and that it would be unwise for any of us to leave the shelter of the banyan tree.

Another weary day passed, the last Wyndham could spend with us, for in addition to being Commissioner of Kumaon he was Political Agent of Tehri State and was due to meet the ruler at Narindra Nagar in two days' time. After nightfall a cart loaded with grass arrived, and when the grass had been removed a few sacks of parched gram and forty pounds of gur were revealed. This scanty but welcome ration was distributed among the men. The guide had not forgotten the sahibs, and before driving away he handed Freddy a few chapattis tied up in a piece of cloth that had seen hard times and better days. As we lay on our backs with all topics of conversation exhausted, thinking of hot meals and soft beds in far-off Hardwar, I heard the welcome sounds of a leopard killing a chital a few hundred yards from our tree. Here was an opportunity of getting a square meal, for my portion of chapatti, far from allaying my hunger, had only added to it; so I jumped up and asked Freddy for his kukri. When he asked what on earth I wanted it for, I told him it was to cut off the hind legs of the chital the leopard had just killed. 'What leopard and what chital', he asked, 'are you talking about?' Yes, he could hear the chital calling, but how was he to know that they were not alarmed by some of Sultana's men who were scouting round to spy on us? And anyway, if I was right in thinking a leopard had made a kill, which he doubted,

how was I going to take the chital away from it when I could not use a musket (I had not brought my rifle with me on this occasion for I did not know to what use I might be asked to put it) so close to the cattle station? No, he concluded, the whole idea was absurd. So very regretfully I again lay down with my hunger. How could I convince anyone who did not know the jungle folk and their language that I *knew* the deer had not been alarmed by human beings; that they were watching one of their number being killed by a leopard; and that there was no danger in taking the kill, or as much of it as I wanted, away from the leopard?

The night passed without further incident and at crack of dawn Wyndham and I set out on our long walk to Hardwar. We crossed the Ganges by the Bhimgoda Dam and after a quick meal at the Dam Bungalow had an evening's fishing on the wide expanse of water above the dam that will long be remembered.

Next morning, just as Wyndham was leaving to keep his appointment at Narindra Nagar, and I was collecting some eatables to take back to my hungry companions, word was brought to us by runner that Freddy had captured Sultana.

Sultana had returned to the cattle station the previous evening. After his men had surrounded the station, Freddy crept up to the large hut used by the cattle men, and, seeing a sheeted figure asleep on the only charpoy the hut contained, sat down on it. Pinned down by 20 stone 4 pounds Sultana was unable to offer any resistance, nor was he able to carry out his resolve of not being taken alive. Of the six dacoits in the hut at the time of the raid, four, including Sultana, were captured and the other two, Babu

and Pailwan, Sultana's lieutenants, broke through the police cordon and escaped, after being fired at.

I do not know how many murders Sultana was responsible for, but when brought to trial the main charge against him was the murder, by one of his gang, of the tenant of the headman of Lamachour. While in the condemned cell Sultana sent for Freddy and bequeathed to him his wife and son in the Najibabad Fort, and his dog, of whom he was very fond. Freddy adopted the dog, and those who know Freddy will not need to be told that he faithfully carried out his promise to care for Sultana's family.

Some months later Freddy, now promoted and the youngest man in the Indian Police service ever to be honoured by His Majesty the King with a C.I.E., was attending the annual Police Week at Moradabad. One of the functions at this week was a dinner to which all the police officers in the province were invited. During the dinner one of the waiters whispered to Freddy that his orderly wanted to speak to him. This orderly had been with Freddy during the years Freddy had been in pursuit of Sultana. Now, having an evening off, he had strolled down to the Moradabad railway station. While he was there, a train came in, and as he idly watched the passengers alighting two men came out of a compartment near him. One of these men spoke to the other, who hastily put a handkerchief up to his face, but not before the orderly had seen that he had a piece of cotton wool sticking to his nose. The orderly kept his eye on the men, who had a considerable amount of luggage, and when they had made themselves comfortable in a corner of the waiting room he commandeered an ekka and hastened to inform Freddy.

When Sultana's two lieutenants, Babu and Pailwan, broke through the cordon surrounding the cattle station, they had been fired at, and shortly thereafter a man had visited a small dispensary near Najibabad to have an injury to his nose, which he said had been caused by a dog bite, attended to. When reporting the case to the police, the compounder who dressed the wound said he suspected it had been caused by a pellet of buckshot. So the entire police force of the province were on the lookout for a man with an injured nose, all the more so because Babu and Pailwan were credited with having committed most of the murders for which Sultana's gang were responsible.

When he heard the orderly's story Freddy jumped into his car and dashed to the station—dashed is the right word, for when Freddy is in a hurry the road is before him and traffic and corners do not exist. At the station he placed guards at all the exits to the waiting room and then went up to the two men and asked them who they were. Merchants, they answered, on their way from Bareilly to the Punjab. Why then, asked Freddy, had they taken a train that terminated at Moradabad? He was told that there had been two trains at the Bareilly platform and they had been directed to the wrong one. When Freddy learnt the men had not had any food, and that they would have to wait until next morning for a connecting train, he invited them to accompany him and be his guests. For a moment the men hesitated, and then said, 'As you wish, Sahib'.

With the two men in the back of the car Freddy drove slowly, closely questioning them, and to all his questions he received prompt answers. The men then asked Freddy if it was customary for sahibs to visit railway stations at night and carry off passengers, leaving their luggage to be

plundered by any who cared to do so. Freddy knew that his action, without a duly executed warrant, could be described as high-handed and might land him in serious trouble if the members of Sultana's gang serving sentences in the Moradabad jail failed to identify their late companions. While these unpleasant thoughts were chasing each other through his mind, the car arrived at the bungalow in which he was putting up for the Police Week.

All dogs love Freddy, and Sultana's dog was no exception. In the months that had passed this pye with a dash of terrier blood had given Freddy all his affection, and now, when the car stopped and the three men got out, the dog came dashing out of the bungalow, stopped in surprise, and then hurled himself at the two travellers with every manifestation of delight that a dog can exhibit. For a tense minute Freddy and the two men looked at each other in silence and then Pailwan, who knew the fate that awaited him, stooped down and patting the dog's head said, 'In face of this honest witness what use is it, Young Sahib, for us to deny we are the men you think we are'.

Society demands protection against criminals, and Sultana was a criminal. He was tried under the law of the land, found guilty, and executed. Nevertheless, I cannot withhold a great measure of admiration for the little man who set at nought the might of the Government for three long years, and who by his brave demeanour won the respect of those who guarded him in the condemned cell.

I could have wished that justice had not demanded that Sultana be exhibited in manacles and leg-irons, and exposed to ridicule from those who trembled at the mere mention of his name while he was at liberty. I could also

have wished that he had been given a more lenient sentence, for no other reasons than that he had been branded a criminal at birth, and had not had a fair chance; that when power was in his hands he had not oppressed the poor; that when I tracked him to the banyan tree he spared my life and the lives of my friends. And finally, that he went to his meeting with Freddy, not armed with a knife or a revolver, but with a water melon in his hands.

VIII

Loyalty

THE mail train was running at its maximum speed of thirty miles per hour through country that was familiar. For mile upon mile the newly risen sun had been shining on fields where people were reaping the golden wheat, for it was the month of April and the train was passing through the Gangetic valley, the most fertile land in India. During the previous year India had witnessed one of her worst famines. I had seen whole villages existing on the bark of trees; on minute grass seeds swept up with infinite labour from scorching plains; and on the wild plums that grow on waste lands too poor for the raising of crops. Mercifully the weather had changed, good winter rains had brought back fertility to the land, and the people who had starved for a year were now eagerly reaping a good harvest. Early though the hour was, the scene was one of intense activity in which every individual of the community had his, or her, allotted part. The reaping was being done by women, most of them landless labourers who move from area to area, as the crop ripens, and who for their labour—which starts at dawn and ends when there is no longer light to work by—receive one-twelfth to one-sixteenth of the crop they cut in the course of the day.

There were no hedges to obstruct the view, and from the carriage window no mechanical device of any kind was to be seen. The ploughing had been done by oxen, two to a plough; the reaping was being done by sickles with a curved blade eighteen inches long; the sheaves, tied with

twisted stalks of wheat straw, were being carted to the threshing floor on ox-carts with wooden wheels; and on the threshing floor, plastered over with cow dung, oxen were treading out the corn; they were tied to a long rope, one end of which was made fast to a pole firmly fixed in the ground. As a field was cleared of the sheaves children drove cattle on to it to graze on the stubble, and amongst the cattle old and infirm women were sweeping the ground to recover any seed that had fallen from the ears when the wheat was being cut. Half of what these toilers collected would be taken by the owner of the field and the other half—which might amount to as much as a pound or two, if the ground was not too sun cracked—they would be permitted to retain.

My journey was to last for thirty-six hours. I had the carriage to myself, and the train would stop for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Every mile of the country through which the train was running was interesting; and yet I was not happy, for in the steel trunk under my seat was a string bag containing two hundred rupees which did not belong to me.

Eighteen months previously I had taken employment as a Fuel Inspector with the railway on which I was now travelling. I had gone straight from school to this job, and for those eighteen months I had lived in the forest cutting five hundred thousand cubic feet of timber, to be used as fuel in locomotives. After the trees had been felled and billeted, each billet not more and not less than thirty-six inches long, the fuel was carted ten miles to the nearest point of the railway, where it was stacked and measured and then loaded into fuel trains and taken to the stations where it was needed. Those eighteen months alone in the

forest had been strenuous, but I had kept fit and enjoyed the work. There was plenty of game in the forest in the way of chital, four-horned antelope, pig, and pea fowl, and in the river that formed one boundary of the forest there were several varieties of fish and many alligators and python. My work did not permit of my indulging in sport during daylight hours so I had to do all my shooting for the pot, and fishing, at night. Shooting by moonlight is very different from shooting in daylight, for though it is easier to stalk a deer or a rooting pig at night it is difficult to shoot accurately unless the moon can be got to shine on the foresight. The pea fowl had to be shot while they were roosting, and I am not ashamed to say that I occasionally indulged in this form of murder, for the only meat I ate during that year and a half was what I shot on moonlight nights; during the dark period of the moon I had perforce to be a vegetarian.

The felling of the forest disarranged the normal life of the jungle folk and left me with the care of many waifs and orphans, all of whom had to share my small tent with me. It was when I was a bit crowded with two broods of partridges—one black and the other grey, four pea fowl chicks, two leverets, and two baby four-horned antelope that could only just stand upright on their spindle legs, that Rex the python took up his quarters in the tent. I returned an hour after nightfall that day, and while I was feeding the four-footed inmates with milk I saw the lantern light glinting on something in a corner of the tent and on investigation found Rex coiled up on the straw used as a bed by the baby antelope. A hurried count revealed that none of the young inmates of the tent were missing, so I left Rex in the corner he had selected. For two months

thereafter Rex left the tent each day to bask in the sun, returning to his corner at sundown, and during the whole of that period he never harmed any of the young life he shared the tent with.

Of all the waifs and orphans who were brought up in the tent, and who were returned to the forest as soon as they were able to fend for themselves, Tiddley-de-winks, a four-horned antelope, was the only one who refused to leave me. She followed me when I moved camp to be nearer to the railway line to supervise the loading of the fuel, and in doing so nearly lost her life. Having been brought up by hand she had no fear of human beings and the day after our move she approached a man who, thinking she was a wild animal, tried to kill her. When I returned to the tent that evening I found her lying near my camp bed and on picking her up saw that both her forelegs had been broken, and that the broken ends of the bones had worked through the skin. While I was getting a little milk down her throat, and trying to summon sufficient courage to do what I knew should be done, my servant came into the tent with a man who admitted to having tried to kill the poor beast. It appeared that this man had been working in his field when Tiddley-de-winks went up to him, and thinking she had strayed in from the nearby forest, he struck her with a stick and then chased her; and it was only when she entered my tent that he realized she was a tame animal. My servant had advised him to leave before I returned, but this the man had refused to do. When he had told his story he said he would return early next morning with a bone-setter from his village. There was nothing I could do for the injured animal, beyond making a soft bed for her and giving her milk at short

intervals, and at daybreak next morning the man returned with the bone-setter.

It is unwise in India to judge from appearances. The bone-setter was a feeble old man, exhibiting in his person and tattered dress every sign of poverty, but he was none the less a specialist, and a man of few words. He asked me to lift up the injured animal, stood looking at her for a few minutes, and then turned and left the tent, saying over his shoulder that he would be back in two hours. I had worked week in week out for months on end so I considered I was justified in taking a morning off, and before the old man returned I had cut a number of stakes in the nearby jungle and constructed a small pen in a corner of the tent. The man brought back with him a number of dry jute stalks from which the bark had been removed, a quantity of green paste, several young castor-oil plant leaves as big as plates, and a roll of thin jute twine. When I had seated myself on the edge of the camp bed with Tiddley-de-winks across my knees, her weight partly supported by her hind legs and partly by my knees, the old man sat down on the ground in front of her with his materials within reach.

The bones of both forelegs had been splintered midway between the knees and the tiny hooves, and the dangling portion of the legs had twisted round and round. Very gently the old man untwisted the legs, covered them from knee to hoof with a thick layer of green paste, laid strips of the castor-oil leaves over the paste to keep it in position, and over the leaves laid the jute stalks, binding them to the legs with jute twine. Next morning he returned with splints made of jute stalks strung together, and when they had been fitted to her legs Tiddley-de-winks was able to

bend her knees and place her hooves, which extended an inch beyond the splints, on the ground.

The bone-setter's fee was one rupee, plus two annas for the ingredients he had put in the paste and the twine he had purchased in the bazaar, and not until the splints had been removed and the little antelope was able to skip about again would he accept either his fee or the little present I gratefully offered him.

My work, every day of which I had enjoyed, was over now and I was on my way to headquarters to render an account of the money I had spent and, I feared, to look for another job; for the locomotives had been converted to coal-burning and no more wood fuel would be needed. My books were all in perfect order and I had the feeling that I had rendered good service, for I had done in eighteen months what had been estimated to take two years. Yet I was uneasy, and the reason for my being so was the bag of money in my steel trunk.

I reached my destination, Samastipur, at 9 a.m. and after depositing my luggage in the waiting-room set out for the office of the head of the department I had been working for, with my account books and the bag containing the two hundred rupees. At the office I was told by a very imposing doorkeeper that the master was engaged, and that I would have to wait. It was hot in the open veranda, and as the minutes dragged by my nervousness increased, for an old railway hand who had helped me to make up my books had warned me that to submit balanced accounts and then admit, as I had every intention of doing, that I had two hundred rupees in excess would land me in very great trouble. Eventually the door opened and a very harassed-looking man emerged; and before the doorkeeper

could close it, a voice from inside the room bellowed at me to come in. Ryles, the head of the Locomotive Department of the Bengal and North Western Railway, was a man weighing sixteen stone, with a voice that struck terror into all who served under him, and with a heart of gold. Bidding me sit down he drew my books towards him, summoned a clerk and very carefully checked my figures with those received from the stations to which the fuel had been sent. Then he told me he regretted my services would no longer be needed, said that discharge orders would be sent to me later in the day, and indicated that the interview was over. Having picked my hat off the floor I started to leave, but was called back and told I had forgotten to remove what appeared to be a bag of money that I had placed on the table. It was foolish of me to have thought I could just leave the two hundred rupees and walk away, but that was what I was trying to do when Ryles called me; so I went back to the table and told him that the money belonged to the Railway, and as I did not know how to account for it in my books, I had brought it to him. 'Your books are balanced', Ryles said, 'and if you have not faked your accounts I should like an explanation.' Tewari, the head clerk, had come into the room with a tray of papers and he stood behind Ryles's chair, with encouragement in his kindly old eyes, as I gave Ryles the following explanation.

When my work was nearing completion, fifteen cartmen, who had been engaged to cart fuel from the forest to the railway line, came to me one night and stated they had received an urgent summons to return to their village, to harvest the crops. The fuel they had carted was scattered over a wide area, and as it would take several days to stack

and measure it they wanted me to make a rough calculation of the amount due to them, as it was essential for them to start on their journey that night. It was a dark night and quite impossible for me to calculate the cubic contents of the fuel, so I told them I would accept their figures. Two hours later they returned, and within a few minutes of paying them, I heard their carts creaking away into the night. They left no address with me, and several weeks later, when the fuel was stacked and measured, I found they had underestimated the amount due to them by two hundred rupees.

When I had told my story Ryles informed me that the Agent, Izat, was expected in Samastipur next day, and that he would leave him to deal with me.

Izat, Agent of three of the most flourishing railways in India, arrived next morning and at midday I received a summons to attend Ryles's office. Izat, a small dapper man with piercing eyes, was alone in the office when I entered it, and after complimenting me on having finished my job six months ahead of time, he said Ryles had shown him my books and given him a report and that he wanted to ask one question! Why had I not pocketed the two hundred rupees, and said nothing about it? My answer to this question was evidently satisfactory, for that evening, while waiting at the station in a state of uncertainty, I received two letters, one from Tewari thanking me for my contribution of two hundred rupees to the Railwaymen's Widows' and Orphans' Fund, of which he was Honorary Secretary, and the other from Izat informing me that my services were being retained, and instructing me to report to Ryles for duty.

For a year thereafter I worked up and down the railway

on a variety of jobs, at times on the footplates of locomotives reporting on consumption of coal—a job I liked for I was permitted to drive the engines; at times as guard of goods trains, a tedious job, for the railway was short-handed and on many occasions I was on duty for forty-eight hours at a stretch; and at times as assistant storekeeper, or assistant station-master. And then one day I received orders to go to Mokameh Ghat and see Storrar, the Ferry Superintendent. The Bengal and North Western Railway runs through the Gangetic valley at varying distances from the Ganges river, and at several places branch lines take off from the main line and run down to the river and, by means of ferries, connect up with the broad-gauge railways on the right bank. Mokameh Ghat on the right bank of the Ganges is the most important of these connexions.

I left Samastipur in the early hours of the morning and at the branch-line terminus, Samaria Ghat, boarded the S.S. *Gorakhpur*. Storrar had been apprised of my visit but no reason had been given, and as I had not been told why I was to go to Mokameh Ghat, we spent the day partly in his house and partly in walking about the extensive sheds, in which there appeared to be a considerable congestion of goods. Two days later I was summoned to Gorakhpur, the headquarters of the railway, and informed that I had been posted to Mokameh Ghat as Trans-shipment Inspector, that my pay had been increased from one hundred to one hundred and fifty rupees per month, and that I was to take over the contract for handling goods a week later.

So back to Mokameh Ghat I went, arriving on this occasion at night, to take up a job about which I knew nothing, and to take on a contract without knowing where to get a single labourer, and, most important of all, with

a capital of only one hundred and fifty rupees, saved during my two and a half years' service.

Storrar was not expecting me on this occasion, but he gave me dinner, and when I told him why I had returned we took our chairs on to the veranda, where a cool wind was blowing off the river, and talked late into the night. Storrar was twice my age and had been at Mokameh Ghat for several years. He was employed as Ferry Superintendent by the Bengal and North Western (metre-gauge) Railway, and was in charge of a fleet of steamers and barges that ferried passengers and metre-gauge wagons between Samaria Ghat and Mokameh Ghat. I learnt from him that eighty per cent. of the long-distance traffic on the Bengal and North Western Railway passed through Mokameh Ghat; and that each year, from March to September, congestion of goods traffic took place at Mokameh Ghat and caused serious loss to the Railway.

The transfer of goods between the two railways at Mokameh Ghat, necessitated by a break of gauge, was done by a Labour Company which held the contract for handling goods throughout the length of the broad-gauge railway. In Storrar's opinion the indifference of this company to the interests of the metre-gauge railway, and the seasonal shortage of labour due to the harvesting of crops in the Gangetic valley, were the causes of the annual congestion. Having imparted this information, he very pertinently asked how I, a total stranger to the locality and without any capital—he brushed aside my hard-earned savings—proposed to accomplish what the Labour Company with all their resources had failed to do. The sheds at Mokameh Ghat, he added, were stacked to the roof with goods, there were four hundred wagons in the yard

waiting to be unloaded, and a thousand wagons on the far side of the river waiting to be ferried across. 'My advice to you', he concluded, 'is to catch the early steamer to Samaria Ghat and to go straight back to Gorakhpur. Tell the Railway you will have nothing to do with the handling contract.'

I was up early next morning but I did not catch the steamer to Samaria Ghat. Instead, I went on a tour of inspection of the sheds and of the goods yard. Storrar had not overpainted the picture: in fact the conditions were even worse than he had said they were, for in addition to the four hundred metre-gauge wagons there were the same number of broad-gauge wagons waiting to be unloaded. At a rough calculation I put the goods at Mokameh Ghat waiting to be dealt with at fifteen thousand tons, and I had been sent to clear up the mess. Well, I was not quite twenty-one years of age, and summer was starting, a season when all of us are a little bit mad. By the time I met Ram Saran I had made up my mind that I would take on the job, no matter what the result might be.

Ram Saran was station-master at Mokameh Ghat, a post he had held for two years. He was twenty years older than I was, had an enormous jet black beard, and was the father of five children. He had been advised by telegram of my arrival, but had not been told that I was to take over the handling contract. When I gave him this bit of news his face beamed all over and he said, 'Good, Sir. Very good. We will manage.' My heart warmed towards Ram Saran on hearing that 'we', and up to his death, thirty-five years later, it never cooled.

When I told Storrar over breakfast that morning that I had decided to take on the handling contract he remarked

that fools never took good advice, but added that he would do all he could to help me, a promise he faithfully kept. In the months that followed he kept his ferry running day and night to keep me supplied with wagons.

The journey from Gorakhpur had taken two days, so when I arrived at Mokameh Ghat I had five days in which to learn what my duties were, and to make arrangements for taking over the handling contract. The first two days I spent in getting acquainted with my staff which, in addition to Ram Saran, consisted of an assistant station-master, a grand old man by the name of Chatterji who was old enough to be my grandfather, sixty-five clerks, and a hundred shunters, pointsmen, and watchmen. My duties extended across the river to Samaria Ghat where I had a clerical and menial staff a hundred strong. The supervising of these two staffs, and the care of the goods in transit, was in itself a terrifying job and added to it was the responsibility of providing a labour force sufficient to keep the five hundred thousand tons of goods that passed through Mokameh Ghat annually flowing smoothly.

The men employed by the big Labour Company were on piece work, and as all work at Mokameh Ghat was practically at a standstill, there were several hundred very discontented men sitting about the sheds, many of whom offered me their services when they heard that I was going to do the handling for the metre-gauge railway. I was under no agreement not to employ the Labour Company's men, but thought it prudent not to do so. However, I saw no reason why I should not employ their relatives, so on the first of the three days I had in hand I selected twelve men and appointed them headmen. Eleven of these headmen undertook to provide ten men each, to start with, for

the handling of goods, and the twelfth undertook to provide a mixed gang of sixty men and women for the handling of coal. The traffic to be dealt with consisted of a variety of commodities, and this meant employing different castes to deal with the different classes of goods. So of the twelve headmen, eight were Hindus, two Mohammedans, and two men of the depressed class; and as only one of the twelve was literate I employed one Hindu and one Mohammedan clerk to keep their accounts.

While one Labour Company was doing the work of both railways the interchange of goods had taken place from wagon to wagon. Now each railway was to unload its goods in the sheds, and reload from shed to wagon. For all classes of goods, excluding heavy machinery and coal, I was to be paid at the rate of Re 1-7-0 (equivalent to 1s. 11d. at the rate of exchange then current) for every thousand maunds of goods unloaded from wagons to shed or loaded from shed to wagons. Heavy machinery and coal were one-way traffic and as these two commodities were to be trans-shipped from wagon to wagon and only one contractor could be employed for the purpose, the work was entrusted to me, and I was to receive Re 1-4-0 (1s. 8d.) for unloading, and the same for loading, one thousand maunds. There are eighty pounds in a maund, and a thousand maunds therefore are equal to over thirty-five tons. These rates will appear incredible, but their accuracy can be verified by a reference to the records of the two railways.

A call-over on the last evening revealed that I had eleven headmen, each with a gang of ten men, and one headman with a mixed gang of sixty men and women. This, together with the two clerks, completed my force. At day-break next morning I telegraphed to Gorakhpur that I

had assumed my duties as Trans-shipment Inspector, and had taken over the handling contract.

Ram Saran's opposite number on the broad-gauge railway was an Irishman by the name of Tom Kelly. Kelly had been at Mokameh Ghat for some years and though he was very pessimistic of my success, he very sportingly offered to help me in every way he could. With the sheds congested with goods, and with four hundred wagons of each railway waiting to be unloaded, it was necessary to do something drastic to make room in the sheds and get the traffic moving, so I arranged with Kelly that I would take the risk of unloading a thousand tons of wheat on the ground outside the sheds and with the wagons so released clear a space in the sheds for Kelly to unload a thousand tons of salt and sugar. Kelly then with his empty wagons would clear a space in the sheds for me. This plan worked admirably. Fortunately for me it did not rain while my thousand tons of wheat were exposed to the weather, and in ten days we had not only cleared the accumulation in the sheds but also the accumulation of wagons. Kelly and I were then able to advise our respective headquarters to resume the booking of goods via Mokameh Ghat, which had been suspended for a fortnight.

I took over the contract at the beginning of the summer, the season when traffic on Indian railways is at its heaviest, and as soon as booking was opened a steady stream of downwards traffic from the Bengal and North Western Railway and an equally heavy stream from the broad-gauge railway started pouring into Mokameh Ghat. The rates on which I had been given the contract were the lowest paid to any contractor in India, and the only way in which I could hope to keep my labour was by cutting it down to

the absolute minimum and making it work harder in order that it would earn as much, or possibly a little more, than other labour on similar work. All the labour at Mokameh Ghat was on piece work, and at the end of the first week my men and I were overjoyed to find that they had earned, on paper, fifty per cent. more than the Labour Company's men had earned.

When entrusting me with the contract the Railway promised to pay me weekly, and I on my part promised to pay my labour weekly. The Railway, however, when making their promise, failed to realize that by switching over from one handling contractor to another they would be raising complications for their Audit Department that would take time to resolve. For the Railway this was a small matter, but for me it was very different. My total capital on arrival at Mokameh Ghat had been one hundred and fifty rupees, and there was no one in all the world I could call on to help me with a loan, so until the Railway paid me I could not pay my men.

I have entitled this story Loyalty and I do not think that anyone has ever received greater loyalty than I did, not only from my labour, but also from the railway staff, during those first three months that I was at Mokameh Ghat. Nor do I think that men have ever worked harder. The work started every morning, weekdays and Sundays alike, at 4 a.m., and continued without interruption up to 8 p.m. The clerks whose duty it was to check and tally the goods took their meals at different hours to avoid a stoppage of work and my men ate their food, which was brought to them by wives, mothers, or daughters, in the sheds. There were no trade unions or slaves and slave-drivers in those days and every individual was at liberty to work as many,

or as few, hours as he or she wished to. And everyone worked cheerfully and happily; for no matter whether it was the procuring of more and better food and clothing for the family, the buying of a new ox to replace a worn-out one, or the paying-off of a debt, the incentive, without which no man can work his best, was there. My work and Ram Saran's did not end when the men knocked off work, for there was correspondence to attend to, and the next day's work to be planned and arranged for, and during those first three months neither of us spent more than four hours in bed each night. I was not twenty-one and as hard as nails, but Ram Saran was twenty years older and soft, and at the end of the three months he had lost a stone in weight but none of his cheerfulness.

Lack of money was now a constant worry to me, and as week succeeded week the worry became a hideous nightmare that never left me. First the headmen and then the labourers pledged their cheap and pitiful bits of jewellery and now all credit had gone; and to make matters worse, the men of the Labour Company, who were jealous that my men had earned more than they did, were beginning to taunt my men. On several occasions ugly incidents were narrowly avoided, for semi-starvation had not impaired the loyalty of my men and they were willing to give battle to anyone who as much as hinted that I had tricked them into working for me, and that they would never see a pice of the money they had earned.

The monsoon was late in coming that year and the red ball in the sky, fanned by a wind from an unseen furnace, was making life a burden. At the end of a long and a very trying day I received a telegram from Samaria Ghat informing me that an engine had been derailed on the

slipway that fed the barges on which wagons were ferried across to Mokameh Ghat. A launch conveyed me across the river and twice within the next three hours the engine was replaced on the track, with the aid of hand jacks, only to be derailed again. It was not until the wind had died down and the powdery sand could be packed under the wooden sleepers that the engine was re-railed for the third time, and the slipway again brought into use. Tired and worn out, and with eyes swollen and sore from the wind and sand, I had just sat down to my first meal that day when my twelve headmen filed into the room, and seeing my servant placing a plate in front of me, with the innate courtesy of Indians, filed out again. I then, as I ate my dinner, heard the following conversation taking place in the veranda.

One of the headmen. What was on the plate you put in front of the sahib?

My servant. A chapati and a little dal.

One of the headmen. Why only one chapati and a little dal?

My servant. Because there is no money to buy more.

One of the headmen. What else does the sahib eat?

My servant. Nothing.

After a short silence I heard the oldest of the headmen, a Mohammedan with a great beard dyed with henna, say to his companions, 'Go home. I will stay and speak to the sahib.'

When my servant had removed the empty plate the old headman requested permission to enter the room, and standing before me spoke as follows: 'We came to tell you that our stomachs have long been empty and that after tomorrow it would be no longer possible for us to work. But we have seen tonight that your case is as bad as ours and

we will carry on as long as we have strength to stand. I will, with your permission, go now, sahib, and, for the sake of Allah, I beg you will do something to help us.'

Every day for weeks I had been appealing to headquarters at Gorakhpur for funds and the only reply I could elicit was that steps were being taken to make early payment of my bills.

After the bearded headman left me that night I walked across to the Telegraph Office, where the telegraphist on duty was sending the report I submitted each night of the work done during the day, took a form off his table and told him to clear the line for an urgent message to Gorakhpur. It was then a few minutes after midnight and the message I sent read: 'Work at Mokameh Ghat ceases at midday today unless I am assured that twelve thousand rupees has been dispatched by morning train.' The telegraphist read the message over and looking up at me said: 'If I have your permission I will tell my brother, who is on duty at this hour, to deliver the message at once and not wait until office hours in the morning.' Ten hours later, and with two hours of my ultimatum still to run, I saw a telegraph messenger hurrying towards me with a buff-coloured envelope in his hand. Each group of men he passed stopped work to stare after him, for everyone in Mokameh Ghat knew the purport of the telegram I had sent at midnight. After I had read the telegram the messenger, who was the son of my office peon, asked if the news was good; and when I told him it was good, he dashed off and his passage down the sheds was punctuated by shouts of delight. The money could not arrive until the following morning, but what did a few hours matter to those who had waited for long months?

The pay clerk who presented himself at my office next day, accompanied by some of my men carrying a cash chest slung on a bamboo pole and guarded by two policemen, was a jovial Hindu who was as broad as he was long and who exuded good humour and sweat in equal proportions. I never saw him without a pair of spectacles tied across his forehead with red tape. Having settled himself on the floor of my office he drew on a cord tied round his neck and from somewhere deep down in his person pulled up a key. He opened the cash chest, and lifted out twelve string-bags each containing one thousand freshly minted silver rupees. He licked a stamp, and stuck it to the receipt I had signed. Then, delving into a pocket that would comfortably have housed two rabbits, he produced an envelope containing bank notes to the value of four hundred and fifty rupees, my arrears of pay for three months.

I do not think anyone has ever had as great pleasure in paying out money as I had when I placed a bag containing a thousand rupees into the hands of each of the twelve headmen, nor do I think men have ever received money with greater pleasure than they did. The advent of the fat pay clerk had relieved a tension that had become almost unbearable, and the occasion called for some form of celebration, so the remainder of the day was declared a holiday—the first my men and I had indulged in for ninety-five days. I do not know how the others spent their hours of relaxation. For myself, I am not ashamed to admit that I spent mine in sound and restful sleep.

For twenty-one years my men and I worked the handling contract at Mokameh Ghat, and during the whole of that long period, and even when I was absent in France and in Waziristan during the 1914-18 war, the traffic

flowed smoothly through the main outlet of the Bengal and North Western Railway with never a hitch. When we took over the contract, between four and five hundred thousand tons of goods were passing through Mokameh Ghat, and when I handed over to Ram Saran the traffic had increased to a million tons.

Those who visit India for pleasure or profit never come in contact with the real Indian—the Indian whose loyalty and devotion alone made it possible for a handful of men to administer, for close on two hundred years, a vast sub-continent with its teeming millions. To impartial historians I will leave the task of recording whether or not that administration was beneficial to those to whom I have introduced you, the poor of my India.

IX

Budhu

BUDHU was a man of the Depressed Class, and during all the years I knew him I never saw him smile: his life had been too hard and the iron had entered deep into his very soul. He was about thirty-five years of age, a tall gaunt man, with a wife and two young children, when he applied to me for work. At his request I put him on to trans-shipping coal from broad-gauge trucks to metre-gauge wagons at Mokameh Ghat, for in this task men and women could work together, and Budhu wanted his wife to work with him.

The broad-gauge trucks and metre-gauge wagons stood opposite each other with a four-foot-wide sloping platform between, and the coal had to be partly shovelled and partly carried in baskets from the trucks into the wagons. The work was cruelly hard, for there was no covering to the platform. In winter the men and women worked in bitter cold, often wet with rain for days on end, and in summer the brick platform and the iron floors of the trucks and wagons blistered their bare feet. A shovel in the hands of a novice, working for his bread and the bread of his children, is a cruel tool. The first day's work leaves the hands red and sore and the back with an ache that is a torment. On the second day blisters form on the hands, and the ache in the back becomes an even greater torment. On the third day the blisters break and become septic, and the back can with difficulty be straightened. Thereafter for a week or ten days only guts, and plenty of them, can keep the sufferer at work—as I know from experience.

Budhu and his wife went through all these phases, and often, when they had done sixteen hours' piece work and were dragging themselves to the quarters I had provided for them, I was tempted to tell them they had suffered enough and should look for other less strenuous work. But they were making good wages, better (Budhu said) than they had ever made before, so I let them carry on, and the day came when with hardened hands and backs that no longer ached they left their work with as brisk and as light a step as they had approached it.

I had some two hundred men and women trans-shipping coal at that time, for the coal traffic was as heavy as it always was in the summer. India was an exporting country in those days, and the wagons that took the grain, opium, indigo, hides, and bones to Calcutta returned from the collieries in Bengal loaded with coal, five hundred thousand tons of which passed through Mokameh Ghat.

One day Budhu and his wife were absent from work. Chamari, the headman of the coal gang, informed me that Budhu had received a postcard the previous day and had left that morning with his family, saying he would return to work as soon as it was possible for him to do so. Two months later the family returned and reoccupied their quarters, and Budhu and his wife worked as industriously as they had always done. At about the same time the following year Budhu, whose frame had now filled out, and his wife, who had lost her haggard look, again absented themselves from work. On this occasion they were absent three months, and looked tired and worn out on their return.

Except when consulted, or when information was voluntarily given, I never inquired into the private affairs of my workpeople, for Indians are sensitive on this point;

so I did not know why Budhu periodically left his work which he invariably did after receiving a postcard. The post for the workpeople was delivered to the headmen and distributed by them to the men and women working under them, so I instructed Chamari to send Budhu to me the next time he received a card. Nine months later, when the coal traffic was unusually heavy and every man and woman in my employ was working to full capacity, Budhu, carrying a postcard in his hand, presented himself at my office. The postcard was in a script that I could not read so I asked Budhu to read it to me. This he could not do, for he had not been taught to read and write, but he said Chamari had read it to him and that it was an order from his master to come at once as the crops were ready to harvest. The following was Budhu's story as he told it to me that day in my office, and his story is the story of millions of poor people in India.

'My grandfather, who was a field labourer, borrowed two rupees from the bania of the village in which he lived. The bania retained one of the rupees as advance interest for one year, and made my grandfather put his thumb-mark to an entry in his *bhai khata*.¹ When my grandfather was able to do so from time to time, he paid the bania a few annas by way of interest. On the death of my grandfather my father took over the debt, which then amounted to fifty rupees. During my father's lifetime the debt increased to one hundred and fifteen rupees. In the meantime the old bania died and his son, who reigned in his place, sent for me when my father died and informed me that as the family debt now amounted to a considerable sum it would be necessary for me to give him a stamped

¹ Register of accounts.

and duly executed document. This I did, and as I had no money to pay for the stamped paper and for the registration of the document the bania advanced the required amount and added it to the debt, which together with interest now amounted to one hundred and thirty rupees. As a special favour the bania consented to reduce the interest to twenty-five per cent. This favour he granted me on condition that my wife and I helped him each year to harvest his crops, until the debt was paid in full. This agreement, for my wife and I to work for the bania without wages, was written on another piece of paper to which I put my thumb-mark. For ten years my wife and I have helped to harvest the bania's crops, and each year after the bania has made up the account and entered it on the back of the stamped paper he takes my thumb impression on the document. I do not know how much the debt has increased since I took it over. For years I was not able to pay anything towards it, but since I have been working for you I have paid five, seven, and thirteen rupees—twenty-five rupees altogether.'

Budhu had never dreamed of repudiating the debt. To repudiate a debt was unthinkable: not only would it blacken his own face, but, what was far worse, it would blacken the reputation of his father and grandfather. So he continued to pay what he could in cash and in labour, and lived on without hope of ever liquidating the debt; on his death, it would be passed on to his eldest son.

Having elicited from Budhu the information that there was a Vakil¹ in the village in which the bania lived, and taken his name and address, I told Budhu to return to work and said I would see what could be done with the bania. Thereafter followed a long correspondence with

¹ An advocate, or lawyer.

the Vakil, a stout-hearted Brahmin, who became a firm ally after the bania had insulted him by ordering him out of his house and telling him to mind his own business. From the Vakil I learnt that the *bhai khata* inherited by the bania from his father could not be produced in a court of law as evidence, for it bore the thumb-marks of men long since dead. The bania had tricked Budhu into executing a document which clearly stated that Budhu had *borrowed* one hundred and fifty rupees at a rate of twenty-five per cent. interest. The Vakil advised me not to contest the case for the document Budhu had executed was valid, and Budhu had admitted its validity by paying three instalments as part interest, and putting his thumb-mark to these payments on the document. When I had sent the Vakil a money order in full satisfaction of the debt, plus interest at twenty-five per cent., the bania surrendered the legal document; but he refused to surrender the private agreement binding Budhu and his wife to work without wages on harvesting his crops. It was only when I threatened, on the Vakil's advice, to prosecute for extortion, that he handed the agreement over to the Vakil.

Budhu was very uneasy while these transactions were dragging on. He never spoke to me on the subject, but I could see from the way in which he looked at me whenever I passed him at work that he was speculating as to whether he had been wise in leaving me to deal with the all-powerful bania, and what his position would be if the bania suddenly appeared and demanded an explanation for his conduct. And then one day I received by registered post a heavily sealed letter containing a much thumb-marked legal document, an agreement also thumb-marked, a stamped receipt for the Vakil's fees, and a letter informing

me that Budhu was now a free man. The whole transaction had cost me two hundred and twenty-five rupees.

Budhu was leaving work that evening when I met him, took the documents out of the envelope, and told him to hold them while I set a match to them. 'No, Sahib, no', he said. 'You must not burn these papers, for I am now your slave and, God willing, I will one day pay off my debt to you.'

Not only did Budhu never smile but he was also a very silent man. When I told him that, as he would not let me burn the papers, he could keep them, he only put his hands together and touched my feet; but when he raised his head and turned to walk away, tears were ploughing furrows down his coal-grimed face.

Only one of millions freed of a debt that had oppressed three generations, but had the number been legion my pleasure could not have been greater, nor could any words have affected me more deeply than Budhu's mute gesture, and the tears that blinded him as he stumbled away to tell his wife that the bania's debt had been paid and that they were free.

X

Lalajee

THE passenger steamer was late in arriving from Samaria Ghat. I was standing on the landing stage, watching the passengers disembark and hurry up the ramp to the broad-gauge train, which I had arranged to detain a few minutes for them. Last to leave the steamer was a thin man with eyes sunk deep in their sockets, wearing a patched suit which in the days of long ago had been white, and carrying a small bundle tied up in a coloured handkerchief. By clutching the handrail of the gangway for support, he managed to gain the landing stage, but he turned off at the ramp, walked with slow and feeble steps to the edge of the river, and was violently and repeatedly sick. Having stooped to wash his face, he opened his bundle, took from it a sheet, spread it on the bank, and lay down with the Ganges water lapping the soles of his feet. Evidently he had no intention of catching the train, for when the warning bell rang and the engine whistled, he made no movement. He was lying on his back, and when I told him he had missed his train he opened his sunken eyes to look up at me and said, 'I have no need of trains, Sahib, for I am dying'.

It was the mango season, the hottest time of the year, when cholera is always at its worst. When the man passed me at the foot of the gangway I suspected he was suffering from cholera, and my suspicions were confirmed when I saw him being violently sick. In reply to my questions the man said he was travelling alone, and had no friends at Mokameh Ghat, so I helped him to his feet and led him the

two hundred yards that separated my bungalow from the Ganges. Then I made him comfortable in my punkah coolie's house, which was empty, and detached from the servants' quarters.

I had been at Mokameh Ghat ten years, employing a large labour force. Some of the people lived under my supervision in houses provided by me, and the balance lived in surrounding villages. I had seen enough of cholera among my own people and also among the villagers to make me pray that if I ever contracted the hateful and foul disease some Good Samaritan would take pity on me and put a bullet through my head, or give me an overdose of opium.

Few will agree with me that of the tens of thousands of people reported as having died of cholera each year at least half die not of cholera but of fear. We who live in India, as distinct from those who visit the country for a longer or shorter period, are fatalists, believing that a man cannot die before his allotted time. This, however, does not mean that we are indifferent to epidemic diseases. Cholera is dreaded throughout the land, and when it comes in epidemic form as many die of stark fear as die of the actual disease.

There was no question that the man in my punkah coolie's house was suffering from a bad attack of cholera and if he was to survive, his faith and my crude treatment alone would pull him through; for the only medical aid within miles was a brute of a doctor, as callous as he was inefficient, and whose fat oily throat I am convinced I should have one day had the pleasure of cutting had not a young probationer clerk, who had been sent to me to train, found a less messy way of removing this medico who

was hated by the whole staff. This young hopeful gained the confidence of the doctor and of his wife, both of whom were thoroughly immoral, and who confided to the clerk that they greatly missed the fleshpots of Egypt and the pleasures they had enjoyed before coming to Mokameh Ghat. This information set the clerk thinking, and a few nights later, and a little before the passenger steamer was due to leave for Samaria Ghat, a letter was delivered to the doctor, on reading which he told his wife that he had been summoned to Samaria Ghat to attend an urgent case and that he would be absent all night. He spruced himself up before leaving the house, was met outside by the clerk, and conducted in great secrecy to an empty room at the end of a block of buildings in which one of my pointsmen had died a few nights previously of coal-gas poisoning.

After the doctor had been waiting some time in the room, which had a single solid door and a small grated window, the door opened to admit a heavily veiled figure and was then pulled to and locked on the outside.

I was returning late that night through the goods sheds and overheard part of a very animated conversation between the probationer clerk and a companion he was relieving on night duty. Next morning on my way to work I saw a crowd of men in front of the late pointsman's quarters and was informed, by a most innocent-looking spectator, that there appeared to be someone inside, though the door was padlocked on the outside. I told my informant to get a hammer and break the lock off and hurried away on my lawful occasions, for I had no desire to witness the discomfiture, richly as it was deserved, of the man and his wife when the door was broken open. Three entries appear in my diary for that date: '(1) Doctor and

his wife left on urgent private affairs. (2) Shiv Deb probationer confirmed as a Tally Clerk on salary of twenty rupees per month. (3) Lock, points, alleged to have been run over by engine, replaced by new one.' And that was the last Mokameh Ghat ever saw of the man who was a disgrace to the honourable profession he claimed to belong to.

I could not spare much time to nurse the thin man for I already had three cholera patients on my hands. From my servants I could expect no help, for they were of a different caste to the sufferer, and further, there was no justification for exposing them to the risk of infection. However, this did not matter, provided I could instil sufficient confidence into the man that my treatment was going to make him well. To this end I made it very clear to him that I had not brought him into my compound to die, and to give me the trouble of cremating him, but to make him well, and that it was only with his co-operation that this could be effected. That first night I feared that in spite of our joint efforts he would die, but towards morning he rallied and from then on his condition continued to improve and all that remained to be done was to build up his strength, which cholera drains out of the human body more quickly than any other disease. At the end of a week he was able to give me his story.

He was a Lala, a merchant, and at one time possessed a flourishing grain business; then he made the mistake of taking as partner a man about whom he knew nothing. For a few years the business prospered and all went well, but one day when he returned from a long journey he found the shop empty, and his partner gone. The little money in his possession was only sufficient to meet his personal debts, and bereft of credit he had to seek employment. This he

found with a merchant with whom he had traded, and for ten years he had worked on seven rupees a month, which was only sufficient to support himself and his son—his wife having died shortly after his partner robbed him. He was on his way from Muzaffarpur to Gaya, on his master's business, when he was taken ill in the train. As he got worse on board the ferry steamer, he had crawled ashore to die on the banks of the sacred Ganges.

Lalajee—I never knew him by any other name—stayed with me for about a month, and then one day he requested permission to continue his journey to Gaya. The request was made as we were walking through the sheds, for Lalajee was strong enough now to accompany me for a short distance each morning when I set out for work, and when I asked him what he would do if on arrival at Gaya he found his master had filled his place, he said he would try to find other employment. 'Why not try to get someone to help you to be a merchant again?' I asked; and he replied: 'The thought of being a merchant once again, and able to educate my son, is with me night and day, Sahib, but there is no one in all the world who would trust me, a servant on seven rupees a month and without any security to offer, with the five hundred rupees I should need to give me a new start.'

The train for Gaya left at 8 p.m. and when that evening I returned to the bungalow a little before that hour, I found Lalajee with freshly washed clothes, and a bundle in his hand a little bigger than the one he had arrived with, waiting in the veranda to say goodbye to me. When I put a ticket for Gaya and five one-hundred rupee notes into his hand he, like the man with the coal-grimed face, was to tongue tied. All he could do was to keep glancing from the

notes in his hand to my face, until the bell that warned passengers the train would leave in five minutes rang; then, putting his head on my feet, he said: 'Within one year your slave will return you this money.'

And so Lalajee left me, taking with him the greater part of my savings. That I would see him again I never doubted, for the poor of India never forget a kindness; but the promise Lalajee had made was, I felt sure, beyond his powers of accomplishment. In this I was wrong, for returning late one evening I saw a man dressed in spotless white standing in my veranda. The light from the room behind him was in my eyes, and I did not recognize him until he spoke. It was Lalajee, come a few days before the expiry of the time limit he had set himself. That night as he sat on the floor near my chair he told me of his trading transactions, and the success that had attended them. Starting with a few bags of grain and being content with a profit of only four annas per bag he had gradually, and steadily, built up his business until he was able to deal in consignments up to thirty tons in weight, on which he was making a profit of three rupees per ton. His son was in a good school, and as he could now afford to keep a wife he had married the daughter of a rich merchant of Patna; all this he had accomplished in a little under twelve months. As the time drew near for his train to leave he laid five one-hundred rupee notes on my knee. Then, he took a bag from his pocket, held it out to me and said, 'This is the interest, calculated at twenty-five per cent., that I owe you on the money you lent me'. I believe I deprived him of half the pleasure he had anticipated from his visit when I told him it was not our custom to accept interest from our friends.

Before leaving me Lalajee said, 'During the month I stayed with you I had talks with your servants, and with your workmen, and I learnt from them that there was a time when you were reduced to one chapati and a little dal. If such a time should ever come again, which Parmeshwar forbid, your slave will place all that he has at your feet.'

Until I left Mokameh Ghat, eleven years later, I received each year a big basket of the choicest mangoes from Lalajee's garden, for he attained his ambition of becoming a merchant once again, and returned to the home he had left when his partner robbed him.

XI

Chamari

CHAMARI, as his name implies, belonged to the lowest strata of India's sixty million Untouchables. Accompanied by his wife, an angular person whose face was stamped with years of suffering and whose two young children were clutching her torn skirts, he applied to me for work. Chamari was an undersized man with a poor physique, and as he was not strong enough to work in the sheds I put him and his wife on to trans-shipping coal. Next morning I provided the pair of them with shovels and baskets, and they started work with courage and industry far beyond their strength. Towards evening I had to put others on to finishing their task, for the delay in unloading one of a rake of fifty wagons meant hanging up the work of several hundred labourers.

For two days Chamari and his wife laboured valiantly but ineffectively. On the third morning when, their blistered hands tied up in dirty rags, they were waiting for work to be allotted to them I asked Chamari if he could read and write. When he said that he knew a little Hindi, I instructed him to return the shovels and baskets to the store and to come to my office for orders. A few days previously I had discharged the headman of the coal gang for his inability to keep sober—the only man I ever discharged—and as it was quite evident that neither Chamari nor his wife would be able to make a living at the job they were on, I decided to give Chamari a trial as a headman.

Chamari thought he had been summoned to the office to be sacked and was greatly relieved, and very proud,

when I handed him a new account book and a pencil and told him to take down the numbers of the rake of broad-gauge wagons from which coal was being unloaded, together with the names of the men and women who were engaged on each wagon. Half an hour later he returned with the information I had asked for, neatly entered in the book. When I had verified the correctness of these entries I handed the book back to Chamari, told him I had appointed him headman of the coal gang, at that time numbering two hundred men and women, and explained his duties to him in detail. A humble man who one short hour earlier had laboured under all the disqualifications of his lowly birth walked out of my office with a book tucked under his arm, a pencil behind his ear and, for the first time in his life, his head in the air.

Chamari was one of the most conscientious and hard-working men I have ever employed. In the gang he commanded there were men and women of all castes including Brahmins, Chattris, and Thakurs, and never once did he offend by rendering less respect to these high-caste men and women than was theirs by birthright, and never once was his authority questioned. He was responsible for keeping the individual accounts of everyone working under him, and during the twenty years he worked for me the correctness of his accounts was never disputed.

On Sunday evenings Chamari and I would sit, he on a mat and I on a stool, with a great pile of copper pice between us, and ringed round by coal-grimed men and women eagerly waiting for their week's wages. I enjoyed those Sunday evenings as much as did the simple hard-working people sitting round me, for my pleasure in giving them the wages they had earned with the sweat of their

brows was as great as theirs in receiving them. During the week they worked on a platform half a mile long, and as some of them lived in the quarters I had built for them, while others lived in the surrounding villages, they had little opportunity for social intercourse. Sunday evenings gave them this opportunity, and they took full advantage of it. Hardworking people are always cheerful, for they have no time to manufacture imaginary troubles, which are always worse than real ones. My people were admittedly poor, and they had their full share of troubles; none the less they were full of good cheer, and as I could understand and speak their language as well as they could, I was able to take part in their light-hearted banter and appreciate all their jokes.

The railway paid me by weight and I paid my people, both those who worked in the sheds and those who worked on the coal platform, at wagon rates. For work in the sheds I paid the headmen, who in turn paid the gangs employed by them, but the men and women working on coal were paid individually by me. Chamari would change the currency notes I gave him for pice in the Mokameh bazaar, and then, on Sunday evenings, as we sat with the pile of pice between us he would read out the names of the men and women who had been engaged on unloading every individual wagon during the week, while I made a quick mental calculation and paid the amount due to each worker. I paid forty pice (ten annas) for the unloading of each wagon, and when the pice would not divide up equally among the number that had been engaged on unloading any particular wagon I gave the extra pice to one of their number, who would later purchase salt to be divided among them. This system of payment worked to the

satisfaction of everyone, and though the work was hard, and the hours long, the wage earned was three times as much as could be earned on field work, and further, my work was permanent while field work was seasonal and temporary.

I started Chamari on a salary of fifteen rupees a month and gradually increased it to forty rupees, which was more than the majority of the clerks employed by the railway were getting, and in addition I allowed him to employ a gang of ten men to work in the sheds. In India a man's worth is assessed, to a great extent, by the money he is earning and the use he makes of it. Chamari was held in great respect by all sections of the community for the good wages he was earning, but he was held in even greater respect for the unobtrusive use he made of his money. Having known hunger he made it his business to see that no one whom he could succour suffered as he had suffered. All of his own lowly caste who passed his door were welcome to share his food, and those whose caste prohibited them from eating the food cooked by his wife were provided with material to enable them to prepare their own food. When at his wife's request I spoke to Chamari on the subject of keeping open house, his answer invariably was that he and his family had found the fifteen rupees per month, on which I had engaged him, sufficient for their personal requirements and that to allow his wife more than that sum now would only encourage her to be extravagant. When I asked what form her extravagance was likely to take he said she was always nagging him about his clothes and telling him he should be better dressed than the men who were working under him, whereas he thought money spent on clothes could be better spent on feeding the poor. Then to

clinch the argument he said: 'Look at yourself, Maharaj,'—he had addressed me thus from the first day, and continued so to address me to the end—'you have been wearing that suit for years, and if you can do that, why can't I?' As a matter of fact he was wrong about the suit, for I had two of the same material, one being cleaned of coal dust while the other was in use.

I had been at Mokameh Ghat sixteen years when Kaiser Wilhelm started his war. The railway opposed my joining up but gave their consent when I agreed to retain the contract. It was impossible to explain the implications of the war to my people at the conference to which I summoned them. However, each and every one of them was willing to carry on during my absence, and it was entirely due to their loyalty and devotion that traffic through Mokameh Ghat flowed smoothly and without a single hitch during the years I was serving, first in France, and later in Waziristan. Ram Saran acted as Trans-shipment Inspector during my absence, and when I returned after four years I resumed contact with my people with the pleasant feeling that I had only been away from them for a day. My safe return was attributed by them to the prayers they had offered up for me in temple and mosque, and at private shrines.

The summer after my return from the war cholera was bad throughout Bengal, and at one time two women and a man of the coal gang were stricken down by the disease. Chamari and I nursed the sufferers by turns, instilling confidence into them, and by sheer will power brought them through. Shortly thereafter I heard someone moving in my veranda one night—I had the bungalow to myself, for Storrar had left on promotion—and on my asking who it

was, a voice out of the darkness said, 'I am Chamari's wife. I have come to tell you that he has cholera'. Telling the woman to wait I hastily donned some clothes, lit a lantern, and set off with her armed with a stick, for Mokameh Ghat was infested with poisonous snakes.

Chamari had been at work all that day and in the afternoon had accompanied me to a nearby village in which a woman of his coal gang, by the name of Parbatti, was reported to be seriously ill. Parbatti, a widow with three children, was the first woman to volunteer to work for me when I arrived at Mokameh Ghat and for twenty years she had worked unflaggingly. Always cheerful and happy and willing to give a helping hand to any who needed it, she was the life and soul of the Sunday evening gatherings, for, being a widow, she could bandy words with all and sundry without offending India's very strict Mother Grundy. The boy who brought me the news that she was ill did not know what ailed her, but was convinced that she was dying, so I armed myself with a few simple remedies and calling for Chamari on the way hurried to the village. We found Parbatti lying on the floor of her hut with her head in her grey-haired mother's lap. It was the first case of tetanus I had ever seen, and I hope the last I shall ever see. Parbatti's teeth, which would have made the fortune of a film star, had been broken in an attempt to lever them apart, to give her water. She was conscious, but unable to speak, and the torments she was enduring are beyond any words of mine to describe. There was nothing I could do to give her relief beyond massaging the tense muscles of her throat to try to ease her breathing, and while I was doing this, her body was convulsed as though she had received an electric shock. Mercifully her heart stopped

beating, and her sufferings ended. Chamari and I had no words to exchange as we walked away from the humble home in which preparations were already under way for the cremation ceremony, for though an ocean of prejudices had lain between the high-caste woman and us it had made no difference to our affection for her, and we both knew that we would miss the cheerful hardworking little woman more than either of us cared to admit. I had not seen Chamari again that evening, for work had taken me to Samaria Ghat; and now his wife had come to tell me he was suffering from cholera.

We in India loathe and dread cholera but we are not frightened of infection, possibly because we are fatalists, and I was not surprised therefore to find a number of men squatting on the floor round Chamari's string bed. The room was dark, but he recognized me in the light of the lantern I was carrying and said, 'Forgive the woman for having called you at this hour.'—it was 2 a.m.—'I ordered her not to disturb you until morning, and she disobeyed me.' Chamari had left me, apparently in good health, ten hours previously and I was shocked to see the change those few hours had made in his appearance. Always a thin, lightly built man, he appeared to have shrunk to half his size; his eyes had sunk deep into their sockets, and his voice was weak and little more than a whisper. It was oppressively hot in the room, so I covered his partly naked body with a sheet and made the men carry the bed out into the open courtyard. It was a public place for a man suffering from cholera to be in, but better a public place than a hot room in which there was not sufficient air for a man in his condition to breathe.

Chamari and I had fought many cases of cholera together

and he knew, none better, the danger of panicking and the necessity for unbounded faith in the simple remedies at my command. Heroically he fought the foul disease, never losing hope and taking everything I offered him to combat the cholera and sustain his strength. Hot as it was, he was cold, and the only way I was able to maintain any heat in his body was by placing a brazier with hot embers under his bed, and getting helpers to rub powdered ginger into the palms of his hands and the soles of his feet. For forty-eight hours the battle lasted, every minute being desperately contested with death, and then the gallant little man fell into a coma, his pulse fading out and his breathing becoming hardly perceptible. From midnight to a little after 4 a.m. he lay in this condition, and I knew that my friend would never rally. Hushed people who had watched with me during those long hours were either sitting on the ground or standing round when Chamari suddenly sat up and in an urgent and perfectly natural voice said, 'Maharaj, Maharaj! Where are you?' I was standing at the head of the bed, and when I leant forward and put my hand on his shoulder he caught it in both of his and said, 'Maharaj, Parmeshwar is calling me, and I must go'. Then, putting his hands together and bowing his head, he said, 'Parmeshwar, I come'. He was dead when I laid him back on the bed.

Possibly a hundred people of all castes were present and heard Chamari's last words, and among them was a stranger, with sandalwood caste-marks on his forehead. When I laid the wasted frame down on the bed the stranger asked who the dead man was and, when told that he was Chamari, said: 'I have found what I have long been searching for. I am a priest of the great Vishnu temple at

Kashi. My master the head priest, hearing of the good deeds of this man, sent me to find him and take him to the temple, that he might have *darshan* of him. And now I will go back to my master and tell him Chamari is dead, and I will repeat to him the words I heard Chamari say.' Then, having laid the bundle he was carrying on the ground, and slipped off his sandals, this Brahmin priest approached the foot of the bed and made obeisance to the dead Untouchable.

There will never again be a funeral like Chamari's at Mokameh Ghat, for all sections of the community, high and low, rich and poor, Hindu, Mohammedan, Untouchable, and Christian, turned out to pay their last respects to one who had arrived friendless and weighed down with disqualifications, and who left respected by all and loved by many.

Chamari was a heathen, according to our Christian belief, and the lowest of India's Untouchables, but if I am privileged to go where he has gone, I shall be content.

XII

Life at Mokameh Ghat

MY men and I did not spend all our time at Mokameh Ghat working and sleeping. Work at the start had been very strenuous for all of us, and continued to be so, but as time passed and hands hardened and back-muscles developed, we settled down in our collars, and as we were pulling in the same direction with a common object—better conditions for those dependent on us—work moved smoothly and allowed of short periods for recreation. The reputation we had earned for ourselves by clearing the heavy accumulation of goods at Mokameh Ghat, and thereafter keeping the traffic moving, was something that all of us had contributed towards, and all of us took a pride in having earned this reputation and were determined to retain it. When therefore an individual absented himself to attend to private affairs, his work was cheerfully performed by his companions.

One of my first undertakings, when I had a little time to myself and a few rupees in my pocket, was to start a school for the sons of my workmen, and for the sons of the lower-paid railway staff. The idea originated with Ram Saran, who was a keen educationist, possibly because of the few opportunities he himself had had for education. Between us we rented a hut, installed a master, and the school—known ever afterwards as Ram Saran's School—started with a membership of twenty boys. Caste prejudices were the first snag we ran up against, but our master soon circumnavigated it by removing the sides of the hut. For whereas high- and low-caste boys could not sit together in

the same hut, there was no objection to their sitting in the same shed. From the very start the school was a great success, thanks entirely to Ram Saran's unflagging interest. When suitable buildings had been erected, an additional seven masters employed, and the students increased to two hundred, the Government relieved us of our financial responsibilities. They raised the school to the status of a Middle School and rewarded Ram Saran, to the delight of all his friends, by conferring on him the title of Rai Sahib.

Tom Kelly, Ram Saran's opposite number on the broad-gauge railway, was a keen sportsman, and he and I started a recreation club. We cleared a plot of ground, marked out a football and a hockey ground, erected goal-posts, purchased a football and hockey sticks, and started to train each his own football and hockey team. The training for football was comparatively easy, but not so the training for hockey, for as our means did not run to the regulation hockey stick we purchased what at that time was known as a Khalsa stick: this was made in the Punjab from a black-thorn or small oak tree, the root being bent to a suitable angle to form the crook. The casualties at the start were considerable, for 98 per cent. of the players were bare footed, the sticks were heavy and devoid of lapping, and the ball used was made of wood. When our teams had learnt the rudiments of the two games, which amounted to no more than knowing in which direction to propel the ball, we started inter-railway matches. The matches were enjoyed as much by the spectators as by us who took part in them. Kelly was stouter than he would have admitted to being and always played in goal for his side, or for our team when we combined to play out-station teams. I was thin

and light and played centre forward and was greatly embarrassed when I was accidentally tripped up by foot or by hockey stick, for when this happened all the players, with the exception of Kelly, abandoned the game to set me on my feet and dust my clothes. On one occasion while I was receiving these attentions, one of the opposing team dribbled the ball down the field and was prevented from scoring a goal by the spectators, who impounded the ball and arrested the player!

Shortly after we started the recreation club the Bengal and North Western Railway built a club house and made a tennis court for their European staff which, including myself, numbered four. Kelly was made an honorary member of the club, and a very useful member he proved, for he was good at both billiards and tennis. Kelly and I were not able to indulge in tennis more than two or three times a month, but when the day's work was done we spent many pleasant evenings together playing billiards.

The goods sheds and sidings at Mokameh Ghat were over a mile and a half long, and to save Kelly unnecessary walking his railway provided him with a rail trolley and four men to push it. This trolley was a great joy to Kelly and myself, for during the winter months, when the barheaded and greylag geese were in, and the moon was at or near the full, we trolled down the main line for nine miles to where there were a number of small tanks. These tanks, some of which were only a few yards across while others were an acre or more in extent, were surrounded by lentil crops which gave us ample cover. We timed ourselves to arrive at the tanks as the sun was setting, and shortly after we had taken up our positions—Kelly at one of the tanks and I at another—we would see the geese coming. The

geese, literally tens of thousands of them, spent the day on the islands in the Ganges and in the evening left the islands to feed on the weeds in the tanks, or on the ripening wheat and grain crops beyond. After crossing the railway line, which was half-way between our positions and the Ganges, the geese would start losing height, and they passed over our heads within easy range. Shooting by moonlight needs a little practice, for birds flying overhead appear to be farther off than they actually are and one is apt to fire too far ahead of them. When this happened, the birds, seeing the flash of the gun and hearing the report, sprang straight up in the air and before they flattened out again were out of range of the second barrel. Those winter evenings when the full moon was rising over the palm-trees that fringed the river, and the cold brittle air throbbed and reverberated with the honking of geese and the swish of their wings as they passed overhead in flights of from ten to a hundred, are among the happiest of my recollections of the years I spent at Mokameh Ghat.

My work was never dull, and time never hung heavy on my hands, for in addition to arranging for the crossing of the Ganges, and the handling at Mokameh Ghat of a million tons of goods, I was responsible for the running of the steamers that ferried several hundred thousand passengers annually between the two banks of the river. The crossing of the river, which after heavy rains in the Himalayas was four to five miles wide, was always a pleasure to me, not only because it gave me time to rest my legs and have a quiet smoke but also because it gave me an opportunity of indulging in one of my hobbies—the study of human beings. The ferry was a link between two

great systems of railways, one radiating north and the other radiating south, and among the seven hundred passengers who crossed at each trip were people from all parts of India, and from countries beyond her borders.

One morning I was leaning over the upper deck of the steamer watching the third-class passengers taking their seats on the lower deck. With me was a young man from England who had recently joined the railway and who had been sent to me to study the system of work at Mokameh Ghat. He had spent a fortnight with me and I was now accompanying him across the river to Samaria Ghat to see him off on his long railway journey to Gorakhpur. Sitting cross-legged, or tailorwise, on a bench next to me and also looking down on the lower deck was an Indian. Crosthwaite, my young companion, was very enthusiastic about everything in the country in which he had come to serve, and as we watched the chattering crowds accommodating themselves on the open deck he remarked that he would dearly love to know who these people were, and why they were travelling from one part of India to another. The crowd, packed like sardines, had now settled down, so I said I would try to satisfy his curiosity. Let us start, I said, at the right and work round the deck, taking only the outer fringe of people who have their backs to the rail. The three men nearest to us are Brahmins, and the big copper vessels, sealed with wet clay, that they are so carefully guarding, contain Ganges water. The water on the right bank of the Ganges is considered to be more holy than the water on the left bank and these three Brahmins, servants of a well-known Maharaja, have filled the vessels on the right bank and are taking the water eighty miles by river and rail for the personal use of the Maharaja who, ever

when he is travelling, never uses any but Ganges water for domestic purposes. The man next to the Brahmins is a Mohammedan, a dhoonia by profession. He travels from station to station teasing the cotton in old and lumpy mattresses with the harp-like implement lying on the deck beside him. With this implement he teases old cotton until it resembles floss silk. Next to him are two Tibetan lamas who are returning from a pilgrimage to the sacred Buddhist shrine at Gaya, and who, even on this winter morning, are feeling hot, as you can see from the beads of sweat standing out on their foreheads. Next to the lamas are a group of four men returning from a pilgrimage to Benares, to their home on the foothills of Nepal. Each of the four men, as you can see, has two blown-glass jars, protected with wickerwork, slung to a short bamboo pole. These jars contain water which they have drawn from the Ganges at Benares and which they will sell drop by drop in their own and adjoining villages for religious ceremonies.

And so on round the deck until I came to the last man on the left. This man, I told Crosthwaite, was an old friend of mine, the father of one of my workmen, who was crossing the river to plough his field on the left bank.

Crosthwaite listened with great interest to all I had told him about the passengers on the lower deck, and he now asked me who the man was who was sitting on the bench near us. 'Oh', I said, 'he is a Mohammedan gentleman. A hide merchant on his way from Gaya to Muzaffarpur.' As I ceased speaking the man on the bench unfolded his legs, placed his feet on the deck and started laughing. Then turning to me he said in perfect English, 'I have been greatly entertained listening to the description you have given your friend of the men on the deck below us, and

also of your description of me'. My tan hid my blushes, for I had assumed that he did not know English. 'I believe that with one exception, myself, your descriptions were right in every case. I am a Mohammedan as you say, and I am travelling from Gaya to Muzaffarpur, though how you know this I cannot think for I have not shown my railway ticket to anyone since I purchased it at Gaya. But you were wrong in describing me as a hide merchant. I do not deal in hides. I deal in tobacco.'

On occasions special trains were run for important personages, and in connexion with these trains a special ferry steamer was run, for the timings of which I was responsible. I met one afternoon one of these special trains, which was conveying the Prime Minister of Nepal, twenty ladies of his household, a Secretary, and a large retinue of servants from Katmandu, the capital of Nepal, to Calcutta. As the train came to a standstill a blond-headed giant in Nepalese national dress jumped down from the train and went to the carriage in which the Prime Minister was travelling. Here the man opened a big umbrella, put his back to the door of the carriage, lifted his right arm and placed his hand on his hip. Presently the door behind him opened and the Prime Minister appeared, carrying a gold-headed cane in his hand. With practised ease the Prime Minister took his seat on the man's arm and when he had made himself comfortable the man raised the umbrella over the Prime Minister's head and set off. He carried his burden as effortlessly as another would have carried a celluloid doll on his 300-yard walk, over loose sand, to the steamer. When I remarked to the Secretary, with whom I was acquainted, that I had never seen a greater feat of

strength, he informed me that the Prime Minister always used the blond giant in the way I had just seen him being used, when other means of transport were not available. I was told that the man was a Nepalese, but my guess was that he was a national of northern Europe who for reasons best known to himself, or to his masters, had accepted service in an independent state on the borders of India.

While the Prime Minister was being conveyed to the steamer, four attendants produced a rectangular piece of black silk, some twelve feet long and eight feet wide, which they laid on the sand close to a carriage, which had all its windows closed. The rectangle was fitted with loops at the four corners, and when hooks at the ends of four eight-foot silver staves had been inserted into the loops, and the staves stood on end, the rectangle revealed itself as a box-like structure without a bottom. One end of this structure was now raised to the level of the door of the closed carriage, and out of the carriage and into the silk box stepped the twenty ladies of the Prime Minister's household. With the stave-bearers walking on the outside of the box and only the twinkling patent-leather-shod feet of the ladies showing, the procession set off for the steamer. On the lower deck of the steamer one end of the box was raised and the ladies, all of whom appeared to be between sixteen and eighteen years of age, ran lightly up the stairway on to the upper deck, where I was talking to the Prime Minister. On a previous occasion I had suggested leaving the upper deck when the ladies arrived and had been told there was no necessity for me to do so and that the silk box was only intended to prevent the common men from seeing the ladies of the household. It is not possible for me to describe

in detail the dress of the ladies, and all I can say is that in their gaily coloured, tight-fitting bodices and wide-spreading trousers, in the making of each of which forty yards of fine silk had been used, they looked, as they flitted from side to side of the steamer in an effort to see all that was to be seen, like rare and gorgeous butterflies. At Mokameh Ghat the same procedure was adopted to convey the Prime Minister and his ladies from the steamer to their special train, and when the whole party, and their mountain of luggage, were on board, the train steamed off on its way to Calcutta. Ten days later the party returned and I saw them off at Samaria Ghat on their way to Katmandu.

A few days later I was working on a report that had to go in that night when my friend the Secretary walked into my office. With his clothes dirty and creased, and looking as though they had been slept in for many nights, he presented a very different appearance from the spruce and well-dressed official I had last seen in company with the Prime Minister. He accepted the chair I offered him and said, without any preamble, that he was in great trouble. The following is the story he told me.

'On the last day of our visit to Calcutta the Prime Minister took the ladies of his household to the shop of Hamilton and Co., the leading jewellers in the city, and told them to select the jewels they fancied. The jewels were paid for in silver rupees for, as you know, we always take sufficient cash with us from Nepal to pay all our expenses and for everything we purchase. The selection of the jewels, the counting of the cash, the packing of the jewels into the suit-case I had taken to the shop for the purpose, and the sealing of the case by the jeweller, all took more time than

we had anticipated. The result was that we had to dash back to our hotel, collect our luggage and retinue, and hurry to the station where our special train was waiting for us.

'We arrived back in Katmandu in the late evening, and the following morning the Prime Minister sent for me and asked for the suit-case containing the jewels. Every room in the palace was searched and everyone who had been on the trip to Calcutta was questioned, yet no trace of the suit-case was found, nor would anyone admit having seen it at any time. I remembered having taken it out of the motor-car that conveyed me from the shop to the hotel, but thereafter I could not remember having seen it at any stage of the journey. I am personally responsible for the case and its contents and if it is not recovered I may lose more than my job, for according to the laws of our land I have committed a great crime.

'There is in Nepal a hermit who is credited with second sight, and on the advice of my friends I went to him. I found the hermit, an old man in tattered clothing, living in a cave on the side of a great mountain, and to him I told my troubles. He listened to me in silence, asked no questions, and told me to return next morning. The following morning I again visited him and he told me that as he lay asleep the previous night he had a vision. In the vision he had seen the suit-case, with its seals intact, in a corner of a room hidden under boxes and bags of many kinds. The room was not far from a big river, had only one door leading into it, and this door was facing the east. This is all the hermit could tell me, so', the Secretary concluded, with tears in his eyes and a catch in his throat, 'I obtained permission to leave Nepal for a week and I have come to see

if you can help me, for it is possible that the Ganges is the river the hermit saw in his vision.'

In the Himalayas no one doubts the ability of individuals alleged to be gifted with second sight to help in recovering property lost or mislaid. That the Secretary believed what the hermit had told him there was no question, and his anxiety now was to regain possession of the suit-case, containing jewellery valued at Rs. 150,000 (£10,000), before others found and rifled it.

There were many rooms at Mokameh Ghat in which a miscellaneous assortment of goods was stored, but none of them answered to the description given by the hermit. I did, however, know of one room that answered to the description, and this room was the parcel office at Mokameh Junction, two miles from Mokameh Ghat. Having borrowed Kelly's trolley, I sent the Secretary to the Junction with Ram Saran. At the parcel office the clerk in charge denied all knowledge of the suit-case, but he raised no objection to the pile of luggage in the office being taken out on to the platform, and when this had been done, the suit-case was revealed with all its seals intact.

The question then arose as to how the case came to be in the office without the clerk's knowledge. The station master now came on the scene and his inquiries elicited the fact that the suit-case had been put in the office by a carriage sweeper, the lowest-paid man on the staff. This man had been ordered to sweep out the train in which the Prime Minister had travelled from Calcutta to Mokameh Ghat, and tucked away under the seat in one of the carriages he had found the suit-case. When his task was finished he carried the suit-case a distance of a quarter of a mile to the platform, and there being no one on the plat-

form at the time to whom he could hand over the case he had put it in a corner of the parcel office. He expressed regret, and asked for forgiveness if he had done anything wrong.

Bachelors and their servants, as a rule, get into more or less set habits and my servants and I were no exception to the rule. Except when work was heavy I invariably returned to my house at 8 p.m. and when my house servant, waiting on the veranda, saw me coming he called to the waterman to lay my bath, for whether it was summer or winter I always had a hot bath. There were three rooms at the front of the house opening on to the veranda: a dining room, a sitting room, and a bedroom. Attached to the bedroom was a small bathroom, ten feet long and six wide. This bathroom had two doors and one small window. One of the doors opened on to the veranda, and the other led to the bedroom. The window was opposite the bedroom door, and set high up in the outer wall of the house. The furniture of the bathroom consisted of an egg-shaped wooden bath, long enough to sit in, a wooden bath-mat with holes in it, and two earthen vessels containing cold water. After the waterman had laid the bath my servant would bolt the outer door of the bathroom and on his way through the bedroom pick up the shoes I had discarded and take them to the kitchen to clean. There he would remain until I called for dinner.

One night after my servant had gone to the kitchen I took a small hand-lamp off the dressing table, went into the bathroom and there placed it on a low wall, six inches high and nine inches wide, which ran half-way across the width of the room. Then I turned and bolted the door,

which like most doors in India sagged on its hinges and would not remain shut unless bolted. I had spent most of that day on the coal platform so did not spare the soap, and with a lather on my head and face that did credit to the manufacturers I opened my eyes to replace the soap on the bath-mat and, to my horror, saw the head of a snake projecting up over the end of the bath and within a few inches of my toes. My movements while soaping my head and splashing the water about had evidently annoyed the snake, a big cobra, for its hood was expanded and its long forked tongue was flicking in and out of its wicked-looking mouth. The right thing for me to have done would have been to keep my hands moving, draw my feet away from the snake, and moving very slowly stand up and step backwards to the door behind me, keeping my eyes on the snake all the time. But what I very foolishly did was to grab the sides of the bath and stand up and step backwards, all in one movement, on to the low wall. On this cemented wall my foot slipped, and while trying to regain my balance a stream of water ran off my elbow on to the wick of the lamp and extinguished it, plunging the room in pitch darkness. So here I was shut in a small dark room with one of the most deadly snakes in India. One step to the left or one step to the rear would have taken me to either of the two doors, but not knowing where the snake was I was frightened to move for fear of putting my bare foot on it. Moreover, both doors were bolted at the bottom, and even if I avoided stepping on the snake I should have to feel about for the bolts where the snake, in his efforts to get out of the room, was most likely to be.

The servants' quarters were in a corner of the compound fifty yards away on the dining-room side of the house, so

shouting to them would be of no avail, and my only hope of rescue was that my servant would get tired of waiting for me to call for dinner, or that a friend would come to see me, and I devoutly hoped this would happen before the cobra bit me. The fact that the cobra was as much trapped as I was in no way comforted me, for only a few days previously one of my men had had a similar experience. He had gone into his house in the early afternoon in order to put away the wages I had just paid him. While he was opening his box he heard a hiss behind him, and turning round saw a cobra advancing towards him from the direction of the open door. Backing against the wall behind him, for there was only one door to the room, the unfortunate man had tried to fend off the cobra with his hands, and while doing so was bitten twelve times on hands and on legs. Neighbours heard his cries and came to his rescue, but he died a few minutes later.

I learnt that night that small things can be more nerve-racking and terrifying than big happenings. Every drop of water that trickled down my legs was converted in my imagination into the long forked tongue of the cobra licking my bare skin, a prelude to the burying of his fangs in my flesh.

How long I remained in the room with the cobra I cannot say. My servant said later that it was only half an hour, and no sound has ever been more welcome to me than the sounds I heard as my servant laid the table for dinner. I called him to the bathroom door, told him of my predicament, and instructed him to fetch a lantern and a ladder. After another long wait I heard a babel of voices, followed by the scraping of the ladder against the outer wall of the house. When the lantern had been lifted to the window, ten

feet above ground, it did not illuminate the room, so I told the man who was holding it to break a pane of glass and pass the lantern through the opening. The opening was too small for the lantern to be passed in upright. However, after it had been relit three times it was finally inserted into the room and, feeling that the cobra was behind me, I turned my head and saw it lying at the bottom of the bedroom door two feet away. Leaning forward very slowly, I picked up the heavy bath-mat, raised it high and let it fall as the cobra was sliding over the floor towards me. Fortunately I judged my aim accurately and the bath mat crashed down on the cobra's neck six inches from its head. As it bit at the wood and lashed about with its tail I took a hasty stride to the veranda door and in a moment was outside among a crowd of men, armed with sticks and carrying lanterns, for word had got round to the railway quarters that I was having a life-and-death struggle with a big snake in a locked room.

The pinned-down snake was soon dispatched and it was not until the last of the men had gone, leaving their congratulations, that I realized I had no clothes on and that my eyes were full of soap. How the snake came to be in the bathroom I never knew. It may have entered by one of the doors, or it may have fallen from the roof, which was made of thatch and full of rats and squirrels, and tunnelled with sparrows' nests. Anyway, the servants who had laid my bath and I had much to be thankful for, for we approached that night very near the gate of the Happy Hunting Grounds.

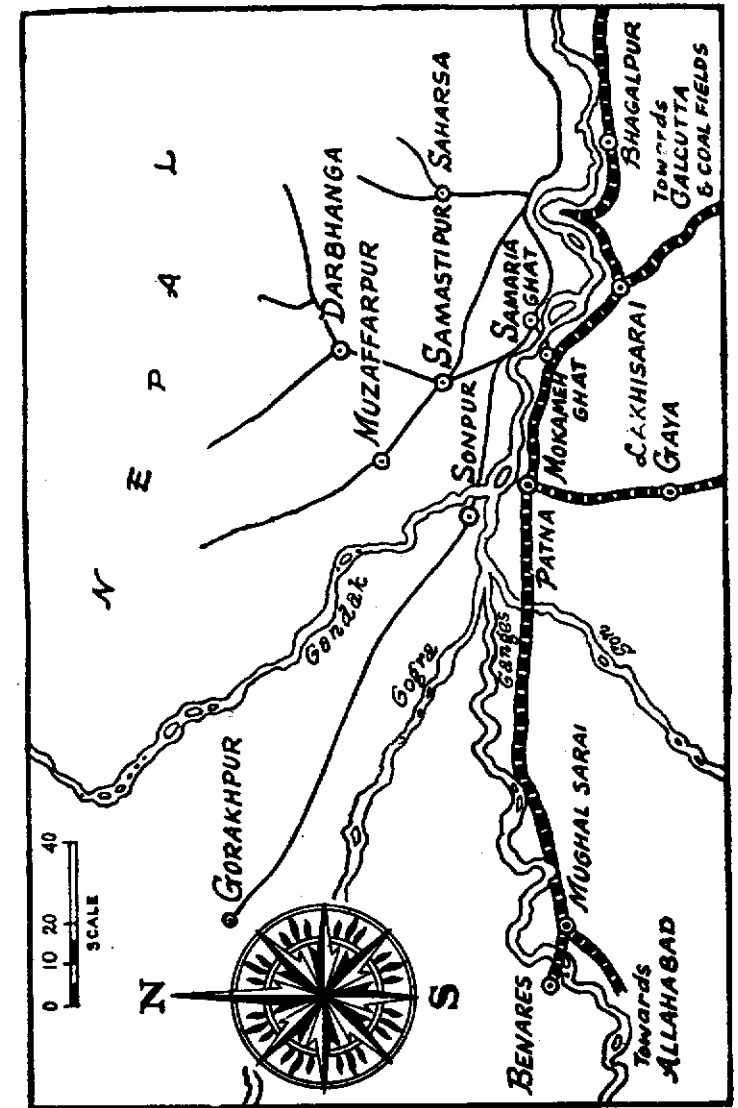
We at Mokameh Ghat observed no Hindu or Moham-medan holidays, for no matter what the day was work had

to go on. There was, however, one day in the year that all of us looked forward to with anticipation and great pleasure, and that day was Christmas. On this day custom ordained that I should remain in my house until ten o'clock, and punctually at this hour Ram Saran—dressed in his best clothes and wearing an enormous pink silk turban, specially kept for the occasion—would present himself to conduct me to my office. Our funds did not run to bunting, but we had a large stock of red and green signal flags, and with these flags and strings of marigold and jasmine flowers, Ram Saran and his band of willing helpers, working from early morning, had given the office and its surroundings a gay and festive appearance. Near the office door a table and a chair were set, and on the table stood a metal pot containing a bunch of my best roses tied round with twine as tight as twine could be tied. Ranged in front of the table were the railway staff, my headmen, and all my labourers. And all were dressed in clean clothes, for no matter how dirty we were during the rest of the year, on Christmas Day we had to be clean.

After I had taken my seat on the chair and Ram Saran had put a garland of jasmine round my neck, the proceedings started with a long speech by Ram Saran, followed by a short one by me. Sweets were then distributed to the children, and after this messy proceeding was over to the satisfaction of all concerned, the real business of the day started—the distribution of a cash bonus to Ram Saran, to the staff, and to the labourers. The rates I received for my handling contract were woefully small, but even so, by the willing co-operation of all concerned, I did make a profit, and eighty per cent. of this profit was distributed on Christmas Day. Small as this bonus was—in the good years

it amounted to no more than a month's pay, or a month's earnings—it was greatly appreciated, and the goodwill and willing co-operation it ensured enabled me to handle a million tons of goods a year for twenty-one years without one single unpleasant incident, and without one single day's stoppage of work.

When I hear of the labour unrest, strikes, and communal disorders that are rife today, I am thankful that my men and I served India at a time when the interest of one was the interest of all, and when Hindu, Mohammedan, Depressed Class, and Christian could live, work, and play together in perfect harmony. As could be done today if agitators were eliminated, for the poor of India have no enmity against each other.



*To Eldyth & Basil
my oldest friends*

Preface

THIS is the story of one who for many years has lived between the two worlds of Britain and India and who has in his own experience, if it is not too pompous to say so, found that 'East and West are but alternate beats of the same heart'. My journey from a deeply religious evangelical home to modernist and catholic Oxford and then through Gandhi's settlement at Sabarmati to the tribal hills of India involved many changes in my outlook and way of life. I was ordained an Anglican priest at Oxford and had almost settled down to the life of a don there, when India caught my imagination and transported me to another hemisphere. After some years of struggle I left the Church, though I have never turned from the life of scholarship. My contact with Gandhi wedded me to India and I am today an Indian citizen. Although I loved, and still love, great and ancient cities, I have lived, by choice, in remote and primitive villages. I have married into tribal society and found felicity there. In India I have found sorrow and joy, disappointment and fulfilment but above all reality, an answer to the prayer: 'From the unreal, lead me to the real.'

In spite of these changes I find a consistent thread running through my life, a perennial philosophy which has survived the loss of a conventional faith. My childhood had impressed on me that here we have no abiding city and that there is an elusive treasure far above the prizes of the world. At school I learnt to love Wordsworth with his stress on the essential quality to be found in the countryside and among poor people. At Oxford I developed the habit of thinking in neo-Platonic terms by which one can build up a store of inner strength that will be independent of external circumstances. Without this I do not think I could have endured the isolation and the tragedies of village life. My early years in India, and specially those in

Gandhi's settlements, were a training for an experience that was hard and difficult, though very well worth while. Even now, when my home is no longer in a village, I spend much of my time and most of my thought among the tribal people.

I am enormously proud of India, and that I have become an Indian, but I am also proud of Britain in whose culture I have my roots and origins. 'The transfer of power in India,' Dr Radhakrishnan has said, 'was one of the greatest acts of reconciliation in human history.' And nothing could be happier than the way the old quarrels, some of which are reflected in the early chapters of this book, have been resolved. In mentioning these I had no desire to revive unhappy memories, but the incidents of the British period are important for the story of my life and I had to include some of them. But I agree with Arthur Koestler when he says of the British Empire: 'The fall of each of the great Empires of the past was an ugly and catastrophic event. For the first time in history we see an Empire gradually dissolving with dignity and grace. The rise of this Empire was not an edifying story; its decline is.'

Europe is deep in my bones, but India has gone even more deeply now, as I came to realize when I set out to write this book, for much of it is written from the Indian point of view and most of its characters are Indians. It could hardly be otherwise with an Indian wife and home, Indian interests, a majority of Indian friends, and above all my absorbed and concerned attachment to India's tribes.

In this book I have tried to tell both Western and Oriental readers a little of how I, having had a certain kind of experience and having become what I am, look on things and react to them.

I have tried to show my life as a whole and to describe those things in it that have been important to me. I have not put in everything. In a recent discussion in the *Times Literary Supplement*, it is suggested that while, inevitably, every autobiography is an essay in omission, readers in the modern world are no longer content with a self-idealized *persona*, 'something not too wide of the mark—but, please Heaven, not too close either': they want the full man. The realistic Confession, the unexpurgated Diary is what appeals today and 'the blacker the

picture of a lifetime the louder the applause with which it is likely to be acclaimed'. The difficulty is that the writer and his readers may have very different ideas about what is important, even about what is black.

My path has sometimes been shadowed by clouds and I have hinted at them in the following pages, but I have not enlarged on them, for I don't think they are very interesting. Other matters, which some readers may envy or even admire, and others will condemn, are my own business and, whatever the modern trend may be, I do not think that in an autobiography a man is required to lower the barriers of the discreet reticence which would govern his everyday conversation. On the whole, though I would not call my life successful (for I have not thought in terms of success), it has been very rewarding, and a portrait of inner happiness is not a mere *persona* but, realistically, the whole man.

Admittedly then, I have not put in everything. Nor have I put in everybody. I am, I think, a friendly and affectionate person and I have made a great many friends. But an autobiography is not a catalogue and I have not been able to mention many people who have meant much to me at different times. I hope they will forgive me and not assume that this is because I have forgotten them, but will realize that it is simply because an author, if he wants his book to be read, must not make it too fat.

V. E.

Shillong, July 1963

Note

I am indebted to Shamrao Hivale for a number of passages reproduced from his book *Scholar Gypsy*; and to All India Radio for quotations from my Patel Memorial Lectures. There are some paragraphs from various journals and newspapers—the *Geographical Magazine*, the *Statesman* and the *Illustrated Weekly of India*—as well as from some of my earlier books.

I am specially grateful to a number of friends who read this book in manuscript and criticized it—N. K. Rustomji, B. Das Shastri, P. H. Trivedi, Margot Gilkey, Juliana Kadlecovics and my sister Eldyth—and above all to my friends in the Oxford University Press. The title of the book was suggested by the Wasant of chapter 11.

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The Tribal World of Verrier Elwin

An Autobiography

VERRIER ELWIN

Angel Infancy

I WAS born at Dover in Kent, England, in 1902, on the early morning of 29th August, a day which is traditionally associated by the Church with the beheading of John the Baptist. This was, of course, on the birthday of King Herod, which was celebrated by a performance of what would probably today be called tribal dances. It is perhaps significant that I should have arrived in the world on an anniversary marked by dramatic action against a well-known Puritan reformer.

I was the eldest of three children, my sister Eldyth being two years, and my brother Basil some five years, younger.

I was baptised with the names Harry Verrier Holman Elwin by no fewer than three Bishops; long afterwards one of them told me, 'Three of us tried to cast the devil out of you, with remarkably little success.'

My father, Edmund Henry Elwin, was himself an Anglican bishop holding the see of Sierra Leone, but he had been appointed Bishop of Bristol when he suddenly died of yellow fever at the age of 38, when I was seven, only a few weeks before returning to England to take up his new assignment. He had been at Merton, which was to be my own college later on, and after serving as a curate in Oxford he went to West Africa as a missionary. He was at first principal of Fourah Bay College but soon became the youngest bishop in the Church of England.

West Africa, at the beginning of the century, must have been of unusual interest to anthropologists and our house was full of what the family called curios—my mother had the amiable habit of going into heathen temples and removing the idols which she ultimately brought home. I wish I had some of them now. West Africa was an exciting place at that time and the

family tradition was that my mother, having wandered by accident into a cannibal village, was on the point of being eaten when my father arrived with a rescue party and delivered her from the cooking-pot.

I hardly ever saw my father, for he was constantly on tour in Africa, and my own memories hardly go beyond two occasions when he gave me a beating for being naughty. One of these, which I still remember vividly, was for running off at the age of six to the railway station, against his orders, to say good-bye to my mother who was going away somewhere.

My mother was a beautiful, intelligent and imaginative woman. Witty and well-read, she liked all the right things, poetry, music and art, but unfortunately her fundamental interest was in a form of religion that was the negation of all of them. Had my father lived and we had gone to Bristol to the beautiful Cathedral Close to live in dignity and with financial security, her life would have been very different. As it was, my father's death left a gap which could only be filled by a passionate devotion to her children and an equally passionate devotion to religion. There was hardly any money. All her life my mother was afraid of boredom. Apart from us children there was nothing for her to do. She could not settle down and so we lived in 'rooms'—furnished apartments, generally one bedroom and one sitting-room with a bathroom which we shared with the other lodgers. My mother was continually moving from one place to another, for she could not get on with landladies and we grew up in an atmosphere of catastrophic rows with these formidable women. This meant that as children we had few friends, there was never a garden to play in, very little privacy, and we were generally on 'tour' or 'transfer'.

Always religious by temperament, mother turned to Jesus to fill the emptiness of her heart and give an interest to life. Evangelical Anglicanism, or 'low Church', which was that aspect of religion which claimed my father's allegiance, is one of the dullest types of religion in the world and it certainly did not satisfy my mother. While remaining loyal to her Church, therefore, she sought consolation in the revivalism which characterizes some of the evangelical groups. This was much more exciting: one might fall into trance, speak with

tongues, dance in ecstasy before the Holy Table. Dear mother tried very hard, but she never succeeded in reaching these heights. Nor did I, little boy with wondering, expectant eyes, hoping for the best.

But there were three big things. There was an unswerving belief in the Bible as the literally inspired word of God, almost a book of magic; we sometimes opened it at random to get a 'message'. Then there was a conviction that at any moment Jesus would come again in clouds of glory, that those who believed in Him would be caught up to meet Him in the air, that He would destroy the bad old world and create a better one.

Thirdly, there was a strong faith in the possibility of immediate communion with God and possession by the Holy Ghost.

These beliefs had very practical results. We could never go to a theatre, cinema, circus or other place of entertainment, for it would have been rather embarrassing if Jesus had arrived in the middle of the programme. I remember, in a house where my bedroom was above my mother's, creeping downstairs almost every night to listen outside her door for her breathing in case she had been caught up into the air after going to bed. I never could really believe that I was sufficiently good to earn this distinction and the possible sudden disappearance of my mother was a constant cloud on my happiness.

This was the atmosphere in which I grew up. It was well calculated to impress on a child the importance of the treasures of the spirit, for here there were certainly no treasures of the flesh; it was easy to believe that here we had no abiding city, for we were always moving on.

All this meant that as a small boy I had to entertain myself in all sorts of ingenious ways. When I was going through a purgatory with the dentist, I spent a lot of time stopping holes in the garden wall, devising horrid probing instruments and drills. I invented a universal language, the first—and fundamental—sentence of which was '*Oo lovessisia eiya*', 'I love you'. I used to paint my own stamps on large sheets of paper and later made what today would probably be a fairly valuable collection, for I found many of the rarest Indian issues in packets of old letters stored away in dilapidated boxes: like a

fool I sold it for £5 to the Army and Navy Stores (our ticket number was 37176) when I went to India.

One great deprivation of those years was lack of reading matter. We could not afford to buy books (this was before the days of cheap paperbacks): we did not discover lending libraries till much later. But I did buy, out of my little pocket money, the *Boy's Own Paper* every week. How excitedly I looked forward to it, but when it came I had to ration it, one story a day, to make it last as long as possible.

How mother did it I have no idea, but every year she took us for a holiday. It must have meant her doing without new dresses, new hats, going by bus instead of taxi, cutting out the cakes when she had tea at Lyons—all the things that children do not realize at the time. So one year we went to Cromer, another to Corfe Castle and later to Eastbourne Swanage and North Wales. These were the bright moments of our young days.

At this time our Relations were very important to us. There were a great many of them and I will describe first my mother's family, for we saw more of them and liked them better. Mother's maiden name was Holman, and the Holmans as a clan were generous and lovable. Their ancestry, however, is not very well documented. My great-great-grandmother was Augusta Anderson who was born in Queenstown: her mother was in turn a Melville who had married a Dr Anderson of Dublin. In April 1826 at the age of seventeen, Augusta married a soldier called James Campbell (whose people were connected with a Paisley-shawl factory) and he went with the Army to India where the couple had three sons and three daughters, one of them being Flora Campbell, our immediate grandmother.

One of her sisters was Great-aunt Jane who married a man called Slane, who seems to have been an engineer, at the age of eighteen. She died a year later and her husband was thrown down the well at Cawnpore during the Mutiny.

William Laban Holman, our grandfather, ran away from home and joined the East India Company. He helped to build the road to Murree in unpartitioned India: he was one of the founders of this attractive hill station, and my mother was born there.

There is no doubt that there was a lot of Scottish blood in my mother's family and, since there was also some link with Ireland, I hope that there was some injection of Irish blood as well.

The Scottish and, desirably, Irish element in their ancestry gave the Holmans, and my mother herself, their human, witty and enthusiastic attitude to life. Some of them were not very interested in religion and Grannie Holman, for example, objected vociferously to her daughter Minnie's marriage to a mere clergyman, though she thawed a little when he became a bishop. She never went to church, did not read her Bible, but from us children's point of view the most exciting thing about her was a guilty secret. She drank. I don't suppose the poor old thing ever got very much, but there was usually a bottle of brandy tucked away behind voluminous black dresses in the wardrobe, and Granny seems to have taken little nips of this when she felt so disposed.

One of the absorbing topics of conversation between Eldyth, Basil and myself was: 'Will Granny go to hell?' Technically, we admitted, this was inevitable, for Granny was not saved. But how could this happen to one who was such a dear, so liberal—out of her small income we received a steady flow of half-crowns, and sometimes even a golden sovereign or half-sovereign—such a character and still so good-looking (long ago, in India, she had been known as the Beauty of the Punjab and people used to come out of their houses as she rode by just to have a glimpse of her)? We shuddered at the thought of those eager flames devouring her kindly face for ever and ever, and mother too hedged a bit when we asked her the dreadful question, even hinting that some special arrangement might be made for the old lady after she passed over.

This applied also to the two worldly uncles, my mother's brothers, to whom we were all devoted. One was Uncle Fred, a physician, who had some sort of job as house-doctor to a titled family living in a castle in Scotland. This was one of the few things that brought colour into our lives. Uncle Fred was a very generous person and baskets of pheasant, grouse, salmon, tutti-frutti and other delicacies used to arrive once or twice a year at our lodgings and mother, who was an excellent cook, would prepare them with all the trimmings.

Uncle Fred was a sportsman, fishing, shooting, yachting, and he always seemed to be in funds. He would bring us boxes of lead soldiers and little cannon and we had wonderful games.

Uncle Herbert, a soldier, was even more exciting. He had an adventurous life, for he qualified as a first-class interpreter in Russian, French and German and this led to his being sent about the world on special missions. At the end of the last century he went with the Chinese Expeditionary Force to assist in the suppression of the Boxers. Some years later, he went to Manchuria where he saw something of the Russo-Japanese War, being attached to the Russian Forces. After distinguished service in the First World War, he was selected in 1919 as Chief of the British Mission to South Russia, where the Bolsheviks declared that, if they caught him, they would crucify him upside down.

In the year that I went up to Oxford he returned to India, where many years before he had been posted to the 16th Bengal Lancers, and held commands, first in Sindh-Rajputana and then in Mhow. He had a hatred of red tape and was known as 'Burn-the-Files Holman' after making a bonfire of documents (including, unfortunately, some irreplaceable land records) in Simla. He finally attained the rank of Lieutenant-General and retired from the Army in 1928 with a row of letters after his name—K.C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O. For over twenty years he was Colonel of the 6th Duke of Connaught's Own Lancers (Watson's Horse). In his company we felt that we were in touch with Distinction, part of a wider world.

Among the aunts our favourite was Aunt Polly. She was one of those unfortunate women who have to sacrifice everything to possessive mothers. She never married, she wasn't allowed to, for she had to look after Grannie Holman. She was very good to us, and perhaps mother's greatest friend, a cathartic, sensible, delightful person. She was her father's favourite and he left her a little money which she invested in a small house in Worthing. Since she lived alone, we often went to stay with her and as a boy I used to see Lord Alfred Douglas about the town, though I was never invited to one of his famous small-boy tea-parties. Perhaps it was just as well. Aunt Polly was more indianized than the others; we were always hearing about

'dak', the 'dhobi' and there was an occasional bad word—'Suar ka batcha' (son of a pig) I can still remember. She made a delicious curry (so did mother) and was an expert at jelabies.

Then there was Aunt Loo, a stout homely person, married to a desiccated architect, with a lot of sons, our cousins; one was commander of a submarine and went down in it in the First World War; another died in Japanese hands after the loss of Singapore in the Second.

Finally there were the relations we hushed up. One of these was poor Cousin Louie, who had committed the desperate crime of joining the Church of Rome. I have vague recollections of a kindly gentle faded little lady wearing a crucifix, but we were naturally not allowed to have much to do with her.

Then there was Cousin Hugh, who was at once an embarrassment and a source of deep satisfaction to the whole family. He was embarrassing because we managed to get him into the Army in the early days of World War I, when the recruiting officers were not very particular, and within a few months of his taking the oath, he went off his head. As he was a full-fledged soldier, Government had to look after him for the rest of his life, thus saving everyone a great deal of money. Cousin Hugh was really, I think, just 'simple'. He was allowed out from time to time and we enjoyed his visits. He used to sing to us, pathetic little ballads like 'Wrap me up in a tarpaulin blanket'; he was convinced that my mother was the Virgin Mary and revered her accordingly, though I did not get the position that this flattering belief should have awarded me.

In contrast, my father's family, the Elwins, were a little dull.

The Elwins are an Anglo-Saxon, not a Welsh, family—Elwin is a Christian name in Wales, a surname in Kent—and *Burke's Landed Gentry* (oddly enough my name occurs in this snob volume, though the only land I am ever likely to possess is a six-foot grave) traces their pedigree to 1531. None of these ancestors were very notable; in 1600 Henry Elwyn, as the name was then spelt, was 'one of the ancients or senior barristers of New Inn'; two hundred years later we find a Michael Elwin as one of the officials of the Naval Victualling Department at Dover; for the most part the Elwins were solicitors, officials and, in recent years, clergymen. Two of my uncles were in the I.C.S.,

which they left at the time of the Morley-Minto Reforms, and the two sons of the younger of them, D. H. Elwin in the Madras and R. B. Elwin in the Punjab cadres, were also in the 1CS from which they very properly resigned at Independence. I think that, with the exception of Margaret Elwin, not listed in Burke, who was burnt as a witch in 1615 for plotting to burn a town in Norfolk and raise a wind to fan the flames, I was the first of the Elwins to depart from the strict and narrow path of orthodoxy in religion and politics since the family began four hundred years ago.

The Elwins, so far as I know, were strictly religious in a conventional way, very definitely Low Church.

Much later my ex-1CS Uncle Edgar Elwin forbade the female members of the family to read any of my books.

Not exactly a relation, but my god-father, Bishop Taylor-Smith, was Chaplain-General to the Armed Forces in the First World War and became notorious for his refusal to allow Anglican chaplains to use crucifixes. His other special aversion was masturbation. He was always talking to me about it, how semen was forty times as valuable as blood, how if one lost it one got dark rings under the eyes and deteriorated mentally, how it stunted one's growth even more than smoking.

I remember later, at a 'squash' at Oxford, how he stood up and, beating his Tarzan-like chest, declared: 'I've never touched a woman and look at me.'

As most of his audience were passing through a (doubtless temporary) homosexual phase, this went down very well. Another friend of my father's, a type called Tyndale-Biscoe, was always telling me to be a MAN, and to this day I can't hear the expression without feeling a little queer.

We grew up. Eldyth became an exquisitely pretty little girl, I a chunky small boy with a prognathous jaw (it had to be pulled back by a dreadful machine attached to it every evening), and Basil was the pet of the house. Eldyth and I naturally joined together to intrigue against him. When I was six, there was a governess who made me learn the first chapter of St John's Gospel by heart. Despite this elevating experience, a year or two later I had a spell of naughtiness and was sent, in the hope of it doing me good, as a boarder to a small private

school in London. My classmates were all girls and they gave me hell. They used to tie me up, put me under a table and prick my bottom with pins. I also didn't like the food, and after half a term mother came up to London (we were then living in a small town called Wallington) and took me home. We then moved to Reigate, where we hired a whole house, which was fun. There was a garden, and mother did most of the cooking, lovely food. We employed a servant, but after a few weeks she ran away in one of mother's dresses with a hundred pounds worth of silver cutlery. This was my first experience of the police and a flattering one. I found one of the defaulter's shoes with finger-prints on it, and I still remember the best notice I've ever had, my mother's 'Verrier, you're a brick.' Fortunately the stuff was insured and the money came in very useful, and the incident probably gave me my lifelong attachment to crime fiction.

I went to school in Reigate, a good sound evangelical school, and remember nothing except that I once got six of the best on the old spot for organizing the boys into a sort of union, which demanded shorter hours and better food for lunch. Mother summoned the headmaster to the house and of the two of us I think he suffered the most.

I then went on to another Prep. school at Eastbourne. The headmaster was an enormous red-faced man called Mr P., who taught me one lesson of lifelong value.

One of the assistant masters used to enjoy hanging round the bathrooms and making improper proposals to the little boys as they came out. This dubious pleasure was, in due course, brought to the attention of Mr P., and he held an inquiry, to which I was summoned as a witness. This was my very first introduction to the harsh realities of sex, if that is the right name for it, and I was embarrassed and confused.

As a result I blushed and stammered through my interrogation and Mr P., towering above me like Jehovah, boomed, 'Call a spade a spade, boy, call a spade a spade.' Ever since, and specially in my book *The Baiga*, I have tried to do this.

When I was thirteen there was the problem of a Public School. In choosing this the family and their advisers were dominated by the desire to keep me untainted by the Church of Rome and

the infidelity which they believed to come from the application of modern scholarship to the Bible.

My father had hoped that I would go to Westminster, but to the family's sheltering eyes there was some danger of Popery there. They tried Rugby, but on cross-examination Dr David, the headmaster, admitted that he accepted the first chapters of the book of Genesis as true only in a symbolic sense, so that was no good.

Finally, on the advice of a missionary friend, I was sent to a west-country school, Dean Close, Cheltenham, which had been founded to uphold the basic principles of evangelical religion, and where certainly there was never any nonsense about applying the ordinary standards of intelligence to the Word of God.

Religion, which played such a strong part in my childhood, therefore, continued to be important at school. There were not only the regular prayers and chapel services but there were such institutions as the Sunday prayer-meeting, where a few of the more pious boys (I among them) met in a dreary classroom and gave little sermons in turn. At the end of the talk we were each expected to offer up an extempore prayer, which personally I found a considerable ordeal. Then there was what was called the Crusaders, which was rather similar but not considered quite so spiritual—even though it was held in the early morning before breakfast. Finally there was the Scripture Union, whose members had to promise to read a scheduled passage of the Bible every day of their lives. As this involved reading through the entire Bible every few years, the passages were often highly unsuitable for young people. But since we had no other form of sex-instruction it probably served a useful purpose.

The headmaster of Dean Close school was Dr W. H. Flecker, the father of James Elroy Flecker, whom I still consider a good poet. When I was at school he was at the height of his fame for, with Rupert Brooke, he was the most popular of the earlier poets of the First World War. We used to sing some of his poems, set to music, in the chapel; one of them was the beautiful *Masque of the Magi* which we performed every December in anticipation of Christmas.

We had a rather heavy dose of the Fleckers. There was a younger son who for some time taught us classics; there was a

daughter Joyce who taught science; and old Mrs Flecker once tried to teach me Hebrew. She, however, impinged on our lives more obviously by a nightly inquisition. She would stand at the end of the dining-room and all of us below a certain age used to file past saying, 'Yes (or 'no'), Mrs Flecker; four (or whatever it might be) for tea.' The 'yes' or 'no' was a report on the movement of one's bowels and the 'four for tea' referred to the number of slices of dry and tasteless bread that one had managed to consume during the high tea which was the main meal of the day.

Dr Flecker himself was, I have little doubt, something of a great man. He built up the school almost from scratch and gave it some sort of position, at least in the west country. He was a brilliant preacher, to whose sermons we actually used to look forward, and he had a sensitive understanding of literature. I remember him once giving an exceptionally fine lecture on Milton. He had a certain amount of German blood, and in the bitter days of the War this went against him. On one or two occasions the good people of Cheltenham walked out of local churches when he was invited to preach.

Dean Close was perhaps not a very good school but there was always something going on. I describe later the thrilling incidents of the Green Bicycle Murder. Another day, equally exciting, Dr Flecker stood up in Hall and declared that he had been arrested in the Army and Navy Stores for stealing a Bible, a tin of sardines and a packet of toilet paper. This was obviously due to either a minor breakdown or a sheer fit of absent-mindedness, but anti-German feeling at that time was so strong that the police actually pressed the case to the courts, though it was naturally at once dismissed.

At this time I was a shy, not very attractive little boy, terribly priggish, filled by my uncles with conventional Imperialist ideas and by my mother with the belief that there was nothing, nothing in the world, to compare with the joy of leading souls to Jesus.

On one occasion, I made a list of the boys in my class with columns in which I gave each so many marks for morals, intelligence, religion and attractiveness and a note on whether they were saved or not. The instincts of the anthropologist, in

however bizarre a form, were already at work. Unfortunately I left the incriminating document one day in the school lavatory and later had the mortification of seeing parts of it copied out on a blackboard, with dire consequences to myself from the boys whom I had marked low for 'attractiveness'.

From the age of about seven and continuing until my third year at Oxford, a very important part of our life was concerned with the Children's Special Service Mission (C.S.S.M.). This was an enterprising organization which arranged missions at seaside resorts throughout the country during the pleasant holiday month of August. A team of workers would descend on some place like Eastbourne or Llanfairfechan and embark on an ambitious programme of meetings, sports and entertainments.

These missions were generally very well done. A sand pulpit was built on the beach and decorated with shells and seaweed. There was a red banner and a lot of jolly singing. There were competitions, all sorts of games, and such things as processions with Chinese lanterns. One of the hymns we sang was 'I am H.A.P.P.Y.'. Another was 'Joy, joy, joy—with joy my heart is ringing' and this accurately expressed my feelings at the time.

But there were two things which were not so good. The first was that the C.S.S.M. created a forced and unnatural religious precocity. I remember sitting on the beach at the age of seven and, under the inspiration of a hearty evangelical clergyman, declaring that I had given my heart to Jesus two years before. I added with a touch of condescension that I had never regretted it. Later this led to a clash with Eldyth, for she too claimed that she had given her heart to Jesus and I was furious at this invasion of my monopoly.

'I am the only member of the family,' I declared, 'who has done it,' and I knocked her on the head with a celluloid doll.

Her physical injury was not serious but the blow to her feelings was severe and I was punished by being locked up in a bedroom all day and having the school crest removed from my blazer. It is curious to reflect that today Eldyth is the only member of our family likely to get to heaven; it will be a thoroughly well-deserved award.

The C.S.S.M., like the Buchmanism of a later period, fostered an upper-class religion. Its meetings and entertainments were

confined to 'visitors', and town-people were not admitted. Visitors, that is to say the children of parents who could afford to pay for a holiday at a seaside resort, were considered to be of higher caste than the children of residents, who had to be content for their spiritual pabulum with the local Sunday Schools. The result was that, while the C.S.S.M. enabled us to make attractive, well-dressed friends of the right class, it introduced a caste barrier based on economic standards which was obviously shocking, and looking back I am astonished that it never occurred to any of us all through those years that there was anything wrong about it. Since then the social revolution in Britain may have changed the C.S.S.M., if it still exists. I hope so, for this was one of the things that I am really ashamed of in my youth. Yet at this time it brought thrills and variety into what was otherwise a rather unexciting life.

Just after I went to Dean Close school the First World War broke out. We were far away in the west country and at first it had little effect on us. I was only twelve years old. But gradually, as some of the best masters were called up, the names of old boys began to appear in the casualty lists and the food steadily got worse, some idea of the realities of war began to come home to us. As the days went by we finally found ourselves eating horseflesh and jealously watching our rations of sugar, butter and bread. We used to swop pats of butter for white mice and postage stamps, and food became a sort of currency.

Later the great influenza epidemic struck the school with great force. It seemed to break out simultaneously in every dormitory and, even more disastrously, in the servants' quarters so that for the first two days there was no one to look after us and no proper food. I remember crawling on hands and knees from my dormitory down to the kitchen in the hope of getting some milk to drink. One of my most admired friends, a really lovely little boy, died. Finally, army nurses came in and took charge.

The war naturally gave a great stimulus to the Officers' Training Corps. I was never very keen on games and used the O.T.C. as an outlet for my surplus energies. Ultimately I rose to be Sergeant-Major and I greatly enjoyed swaggering about in my Sam Browne. I was an expert on bombs and in the written

exam. for Certificate A I got 98 per cent marks for my paper on the theory of bombing. I could draw a plan of the inside of a Mills Bomb and various other sinister weapons. Unfortunately, I was not quite so good on the practical side and, on the one occasion when we were permitted to use live bombs, I threw mine straight up into the air and nearly killed the C.O.

When victory came we were as excited at school as anywhere in the country and as Sergeant-Major I let off a barrage of crackers from the top of the school tower in the early morning of Victory Day. Later, I led a procession that escorted a captured German tank through the streets of Cheltenham.

It never occurred to anyone that there was the least inconsistency between the Scripture classes, where we were taught to love our enemies, and the Bombing classes, where we were taught to kill them.

One of the strongest influences in my life was a young woman—whom I never saw. I was seventeen years old when she was murdered and she was twenty-one. Her name was Bella Wright, pretty and forthcoming, engaged to be married to a stoker. One day her dead body was found on an old Roman road near Leicester.

Six months later one of our masters at Dean Close, a Mr Ronald Light, was arrested and charged with her murder. Mr Light had been teaching me, and I shall never forget the thrill when Dr Flecker rose solemnly in the Great Hall and told us about it. We had sardines and sausages for high tea that evening, just as we had when Dr Flecker himself was arrested, to create an optimistic atmosphere.

Mr Light was ultimately acquitted, and we were all happy about it, for he was a pleasant little man, but he did not come back to the school. It was hard to get masters in those war days and we therefore remained one short.

I had managed to establish myself by that time as a special case, for I had decided to take English literature, and the cut fell on me. There was no one to teach me and so Dr Flecker turned me loose in the library and told me to teach myself. Bella Wright's murder thus had the unexpected result that for a whole year I had the opportunity of rummaging about in an excellent collection of books and exploring the main roads and

by-ways of poetry. I had to. There was no one to make me work but myself. For someone of a less studious temperament this might have been fatal, but since I was already approaching books in the spirit of a lover, the opportunity to work in freedom gave me those habits of research which I still have.

An Anglo-Catholic clergyman, to whom a friend of mine confessed that he had got into trouble by going after girls, suggested to him that 'he might try boys: for they were "cleaner" and safer'.

For many years I thought this was rather shocking, until one day quite recently I read the first volume of Victor Gollancz's autobiography. Gollancz had one great love, for a boy, during his schooldays, but it was a passing phase and he goes on to say: 'Though devoid of homosexual leanings myself (since that one experience) and strongly sexed in the normal manner, I wonder whether homosexual love may not sometimes be purer (purer in heart) than the average heterosexual love; and whether to give everything and demand nothing, after the fashion of chivalry, may not commonly be the mark of it.' He wonders whether the 'strong sweetness, the unfeverish intensity, the quality of acceptance rather than of seeking' does not suggest that schoolboy and schoolgirl 'pashes' and 'crushes' may not be 'among the best things in life'.

I have never before found anyone who had the courage to say this but I think there is something in it. Dean Close school was riddled, as the headmaster put it, with 'impurity' and though I left school without ever knowing exactly what he meant, I think masturbation and certainly 'little boys' must have been in his mind. Official opposition naturally developed interest in our pretty juniors into what was almost a cult; so far as I know, and certainly in my own case, nothing ever 'occurred', but there was a sweetness and charm, all the attraction of forbidden fruit. There was one boy especially whom I loved, a gifted and beautiful child. We read Rossetti's Italian poems in the original as a romantic way of learning the language; he went to Cambridge and I once stayed with him in King's College after I had gone to Oxford: the luminous beauty of the surroundings and the joy of simply being with him kept me mentally intoxicated for months.

Until I was twenty-one I knew nothing about women and certainly never could have anticipated that one day I would be mentioned half-a-dozen times as an authority on the sexual behaviour of the human female in the Kinsey Report. Tribal children know all about a woman's anatomy, the rules of menstruation and—whatever Malinowski may have said—how babies come, before they are five years old. I knew nothing when I was four times that age. Most tribal children have had exciting and ecstatic experiences by twelve or thirteen. All I had were timid glances. The first I exchanged, when I was about seven, was with my cousin Joan, a gloriously pretty child of six; the second, when I was twelve, with a girl of my own age called Robina whom I still remember as the most sexually exciting creature I have ever encountered. Except, however, for carrying her pick-a-back in the c s s m sports at Eastbourne, I made no advances and so never arrived.

My boyhood was thus a rather curious affair. During the holidays, we had a life with very few comforts, and virtually no amusements (except religious ones): in those days there were few cinemas and few cars. We met very few people and my father's friends, such as Willie Holland, Alec Fraser, Tom Alvarez, Walter Miller (names famous in missionary history), who used to come to see that we were all right, were all of a certain highly religious type. We had to work very hard and only once did we have a servant for a short time. My mother did the cooking, cleaning, most of the washing and we children used to help as much as we could. This, so far as I remember, we did not mind at all. It was all rather fun and we did not, in fact, realize at that time how greatly restricted our horizons were nor how much more life had to offer.

But there was one thing, completely inconsistent with the rest, that made all the difference. When I was about sixteen I discovered poetry and fell in love with the beauty of words. At first, perhaps naturally, I was attracted by Tennyson and similar poets; a little later I was intoxicated by Swinburne; I bought a volume of Yeats' poems out of my meagre pocket-money. But my great joy was Wordsworth.

In the early mornings at school I used to wander out into the woods and fields with a little blue-bound selection of his poems,

and I would sit in the peace of that gentle countryside absorbing the gentle message of the poet. This stimulated my love of natural beauty and later I knew no greater happiness than to make walking-tours in the Lake District; once I traced the poet's steps up the River Duddon to its source, reading the Duddon sonnets along the way.

In fact, for the last two years at school I lived in a sort of trance of delight. I was in two worlds which could not be reconciled. Orthodox evangelicalism stood strangely beside the mystical pantheism of Wordsworth, and at that time, and for several years afterwards, I did not know which was the real thing for me. I think I was rather a puzzle to the school staff and I remember one day walking through the headmaster's garden, which had a superb display of roses, with Mrs Flecker and quoting Richard Jefferies to her about 'that pure colour which is rest of heart'. I have rarely seen a woman look so astonished.

I would not like to say that my schooldays were unhappy. As I look back I feel mostly a certain regret, not about happiness but that I could have had so much better an education if I had been put in a different kind of school, taught in a different way and had made other friends. Yet even so I did learn much about the beauty and joy of life.

My home was a place of intense affection. Mother was a darling and looked after us wonderfully. But we were poor and had to grow up the hard way. I am not sorry about that, any more than I regret the later troubles with the Church and the police. The result has been that later, since I had learnt not to expect anything, I was often agreeably surprised, and even now, when anything nice happens to me, I feel grateful to life for being so pleasant after all.

Youth of Delight

*Youth of delight, come hither,
And see the opening morn,
Image of truth new-born.*

—William Blake

I

I WENT up to Oxford in the autumn of 1921. My knowledge of life was almost entirely literary, based on books in the school library. I had very little money, it was the first time I had ever been on my own, and I felt rather lost. Moreover, it was a disturbing period for, as Roger Fulford says, in *Right Honourable Gentleman*, of the Oxford of 1921-2:

Never has undergraduate life been more terrifyingly, more scorchingly brilliant than in the years when England settled down to enjoy the peace. The young men of Oxford drank their wines and spirits, spent their fathers' modest fortunes, and put the world to rights with all the poise and sophistication of Victorian clubmen; they gossiped about one another with such backbiting gusto that the University at times recalled the cackling malice of a tea-party at a bridge club for ladies. The fashion for disguising intelligence by behaving like an enthusiastic wasp had spread rapidly to Oxford from Bloomsbury. Discussion of subjects, which is generally profoundly boring, had given place to discussion of people, which is always fascinating; tartness and wit were the essential ingredients of conversation. It is not only the passage of years, not only the tricks of memory, not only the blandishments of social historians which conjure up this sparkling vision; it was in sober fact a brilliant epoch. Oxford in 1922 whispered the last enchantments of the Edwardian Age.

According to my calculations, it was in the third year of my undergraduate tutelage that Claude and Eustace (in *Right Ho, Jeeves*) were sent down, their amiable lunacy being characteristic of my own day. I myself led a procession along the High and ended up with a passionate speech from the steps of the Police Station protesting against the admission of women to the University.

My college was Merton, as it had been my father's, and the Warden, Tommy Bowman, always wrote my father's initials instead of mine. I had very small rooms under the roof in Mob Quad, immediately below the Chapel and facing the famous Library which dates back to 1377.

My scout was called Hobbes. A sign of his approval was to give a cup of early morning tea, free of charge, to his special young men. I took some time to win this accolade, though when I did it was enthusiastic, but for the first year I had the mortification of seeing my neighbours get their tea while I didn't.

In my second year I moved to the ground floor and henceforth all was well. The two years I spent in this large room with its dark red hangings, its enormous mirror with a bullet hole made by a drunken undergraduate trying to commit suicide by shooting at his reflection, its ghosts (two witches were supposed to have been burnt on the site), and a host of friends were probably the happiest in my life.

We had a distinguished set of dons. The greatest, I suppose, was A. C. Bradley, who had a profound influence on T. S. Eliot who had spent a year at Merton reading the *Posterior Analytics* with Professor Joachim. There was also Sir Walter Raleigh, who tutored me for all too short a time; and W. W. How, the Senior Tutor, who took me through some books of Livy in my first term.

The most remarkable of the dons was, however, H. W. Garrod, the authority on Keats and Wordsworth, a rather devastating person whom I adored.

After suffering the indignity of Pass Mods., which at that time you had to do as a preliminary for a number of Honours Schools, in my third term I started on English Literature. Everyone advised against it, as it was a new School and was

said to be one in which it was very hard to get a First. My tutor was David Nichol Smith, a great specialist on eighteenth-century poetry, unbelievably handsome, charming and quiet. Merton also had H. C. Wyld, the terror of generations of women students, my terror too until I came to know him, and I was also taught by Sir George Gordon for a short time.

Since in 1921 English literature had not yet established itself as a respectable subject in the University, there was no scholarship in the subject offered at Merton to which, as my father's college, my family was anxious I should go. Accordingly, I went up as a Commoner and was condemned for three years to wear the little jacket which was not altogether unlike, except in its dull sub-fusc colour, an Adi or Mishmi coat of a kind which I often wear today.

In my second term I was awarded the Fowler Exhibition but this did not give me the privilege of wearing a scholar's gown. A year later I sat for a coveted University scholarship, the Charles Oldham, which was awarded for Shakespeare studies. The preparation for this took me out of the ordinary rut of Schools, for I had to go into problems of textual emendation and bibliography and I was very excited and pleased when I won it. The remuneration, in terms of the purchasing power of the rupee today, was something like three thousand rupees, and in addition the College gave a handsome prize of books.

After I got my degree I won another University prize, the Matthew Arnold, for an essay, 'The Poetry of Revolution', which rather interestingly anticipated later events.

My chief failure was the Newdigate. The subject for the poem was Michelangelo and I came fifth out of a large field. 'It was too much of a sermon,' said Garrod.

The teaching at Oxford is, of course, quite different from anything in the world and almost the opposite of the kind of instruction inflicted on students in India. I myself never sat through a single course of lectures in my five years (for I have always believed that the need for lectures disappeared in the fifteenth century, when the printing-press came into use) though I attended a few which promised unusual entertainment. Since most of the dons read out their lectures I did not see why I could not obtain the same result in comfort by reading the

stuff in a book. In fact, I was only actually taught for one hour a week but it was extraordinary how effective that teaching could be.

My official studies in English stopped at the year 1800. It was possible to take a further paper covering the whole of the nineteenth century but my tutor advised against it. There was too much 'literature' in it; it was too readable and the examiners accordingly tried to make it as difficult as possible. You were not asked straight questions, for example, about Matthew Arnold's philosophy but were told to compare it with that of some obscure clergyman, nor would you get a simple question on Carlyle's style. There would always be a catch in it. The result was that my approach to modern poetry was entirely non-professional and I was able to read the Victorians for pleasure and not as a duty.

On the other hand, I never suffered from the undue professionalism of which Eng. Lit. has frequently been accused. It was a new School then and everyone was exploring. In fact, it was a great thing to be forced to study Shakespeare properly, which I would probably never have done otherwise. A great range of seventeenth-century poetry (John Donne especially) would have been lost to me if I had not had to read it for Schools. The chief thing, however, was that I came to know and love the eighteenth century. My tutor Nichol Smith's house was full of its books and I suspect that he never read an eighteenth-century poem except in its first edition. After I had taken my degree he asked me to give him a little help in editing *The Oxford Book of Eighteenth Century Verse* and I read through vast quantities of good and bad poetry in the eighteen volumes of Chalmers's *English Poets*. Once a week I used to go to Nichol Smith in the evening and we would sit together for a couple of hours separating the gold from the dross. In these sessions I probably learnt more about good taste and the essential nature of poetry than in all the rest of my studies put together.

The eighteenth century included, of course, a good deal of Blake, and Wordsworth and Coleridge up to the publication of the *Lyrical Ballads*. Nichol Smith would never agree that the eighteenth-century poets were indifferent to Nature and put me on to discovering Nature-poetry among writers who were

popularly supposed to be entirely urban in outlook. It was worth while doing the School if only to learn to appreciate Pope and Dryden, and fall under the spell of Boswell and Johnson. Nichol Smith, as a true eighteenth-century man, believed in plain straightforward prose and discouraged the purple patch.

I went through a D. H. Lawrence period which was bad both for my style and my thinking, but I soon left it behind. My discovery of the great moderns, T. S. Eliot and Ezra Pound, was delayed until I went to the Indian forest and it was not until I was in Shillong that I developed my enthusiastic admiration for W. H. Auden.

From time to time I was given some very good advice. Sir Walter Raleigh warned me never to claim, as I had claimed, to enjoy *The Faerie Queene*. 'It immediately', he said, 'stamps you as a humbug.' Once in an essay I brought in a quotation in Italian, a language which I knew very slightly. Garrod criticized this saying, 'It looks as though you have brought it in simply to show you can.'

I had a certain gift of making epigrams at that time, and Garrod encouraged me in this but he jumped on me when I made a reference in an essay to the 'essential gutlessness' of somebody. I had been inspired to it by something, I think, in Kipling but Garrod would have none of it.

'Mr Elwin, Mr Elwin,' he moaned, 'never, never do a thing like this again.'

I think the very first time I appeared in print was when Garrod, who had been asked to write an article for some University journal on the seventeenth-century dramatist Middleton, wrote half of it and asked me to complete it for him. This was a rather alarming honour, since Garrod was undoubtedly the greatest authority on the subject in the University. However, I produced a draft of a complete article and he accepted it without making any alterations. I expressed the fear that people might notice the decline in style in the part which I had written, whereupon he said, 'There are no two human beings, Mr Elwin, who will read this article with the same attention which you and I have given it.'

In these days I am often asked to prepare drafts for other people, who are not always as kind to me as Garrod was when

I was just a beginner. A thing which frequently amused me in Shillong when K. L. Mehta was Adviser was his habit, when I put up a draft, of altering almost every word and then writing in the margin, 'An excellent draft. I have ventured to make one or two verbal alterations.' On the whole, however, I enjoy both preparing drafts and correcting those prepared by other people. In the first case one writes with a certain sense of irresponsibility and freedom, in the second with a school-masterish pleasure in putting others right.

Another valuable piece of advice was from a visitor to Oxford, the great evangelist, Dr J. J. Meyer, who came to give a number of sermons, and whom I persuaded to have tea in my rooms. I had naturally tidied up everything and carefully emptied my waste-paper-basket. After we had talked a little while I saw his eyes stray to my desk and he presently said, 'If you want to make progress in the world of literature or scholarship, you must constantly tear up what you have written and write it again. I always judge a scholar by the amount of discarded paper in his waste-paper-basket.' This has always remained with me and I am afraid I have got through an enormous quantity of waste paper in the past thirty years of writing, quite apart, of course, from what I have actually published.

In 1924 I took my English Finals and was awarded a First. Professor Wyld, rather grumpily, told me that it was a good one and that I had got Alpha Plus for three papers and Alphas for the rest, including, to my great surprise, the three Old English and Language papers. It is significant of the uselessness of much education that within a few years I had forgotten every single thing about Anglo-Saxon and Middle English, at which I had presumably done reasonably well.

II

After finishing my English course I decided to stay on for another two years and do the Theology Finals, which means you take your B.A. degree all over again, and Merton gave me a generous grant of money to enable me to do so. In my fourth year I had to go out of college and I found digs, near what is

now St Peter's College, which I shared with a very close friend of mine, George Bosworth. I can remember little about the year I spent in lodgings except that they were almost next door to the Church of St Peter-le-Bailey, where my father had his first curacy, and that George had a favourite quotation, from *Ecce Homo* I think, that he never tired of using: 'No love is pure that is not passionate, no virtue safe that is not enthusiastic.'

My theological tutor, F. W. Green, was a High Churchman with modernist leanings, that is to say, he was a deeply religious man who believed in Truth. There was a story in my day attributed to Cardinal Newman that when he was asked what kinds of protection there were against the modern German 'higher criticism', he replied, 'One is the shield of the Holy Spirit and the other—an ignorance of the German language.' However, I started to learn German but did not get very far with it. But Green knew it well and gave me vast piles of notes which he had taken from the most advanced German theologians. My outlook, therefore, became more or less that of a book famous in my time though doubtless forgotten now—*Essays, Catholic and Critical*.

In those days the old controversy about the verbal inspiration of the Bible was still very much alive. Green's contribution to it was characteristic. The one thing he said that he really believed in about the Bible was its verbal inspiration, at least that of the King James's men who did the Authorized Version. In fact, all the great Elizabethans were verbally inspired. It was not the language of the Bible but its opinions that he considered sometimes dubious.

In my fourth year the annual Church Congress was held in Oxford, and the authorities thought they might brighten it up by having a session on the subject: 'What Youth asks of the Church'. I was chosen to represent Oxford and an old classmate (as he would be called in India), S. C. Neill, represented Cambridge. Neill was not exactly a 'fellow-student', for at school he had always been in quite a different class to me, earning scholarships and prizes with rather intimidating brilliance. He is now a bishop but still, I believe, a very learned man. Shortly before the Congress he wrote to me asking for a

copy of my speech and in all innocence I sent it to him. He did not return the compliment, with the result that when the day came he was in a very favourable position to make some carefully prepared cracks at my expense. I still remember his referring to 'the warm streams of oratory that had descended on the audience from Oxford' (loud laughter) and his going on to say that he spoke for 'the sheep that had no shepherd', which was exactly what I thought I had been doing myself.

This speech of mine got me into the headlines and for the first time in my life I saw myself in big type. I had made some remark that older people seemed to think that all youth was interested in was 'Food, Felix and Football'—Felix was a feline forerunner of Mickey Mouse. Feeble as this was, it stood out in the dull deliberations of the churchmen and the newspapers splashed it in large capitals. The intoxicating effect of this, for the first drink is always the best, was increased by an enthusiastic letter from no less a person than Margot Asquith agreeing with everything which I was reported to have said.

My mother took a furnished house on Headington Hill, a very old and charming house where I used to spend my Sundays. I was fond of cycling in those days and the joy of free-wheeling down into Oxford more than atoned for the labour of pushing my bike up the hill.

Another place in the lovely neighbouring countryside which I often visited was a farm at Elsfield, the home of a great friend of mine at Univ., Mervyn Hatt. There was a mother, almost paralysed by arthritis but a most heroic and witty person. There was the father, a typical English farmer of the old school, and two very pretty sisters, and a number of us used to go up there and enjoy the warmth and hospitality of English village life.

Mervyn qualified as a doctor, a very good one, and later went to India to work in the C.M.S. hospital at Ranaghat near Calcutta, where he was well known as both physician and surgeon. He was, to some extent, influenced by Gandhi's ideas and inspired the staff of the hospital to do away with sweepers: everybody agreed to do the sweeping themselves. This valiant attempt to banish untouchability unfortunately did not have the desired effect, for the sweepers were furious at losing their

jobs and their discontent was fanned by a number of Communist agitators. One evening in November 1949 someone appeared with a gun at the window of the room where the hospital staff were having supper and killed Mervyn himself and two of his nurses. Even at Oxford Mervyn had some of the marks of a true saint and his early death was a tragic loss both to medicine and the cause of genuine religion.

After a year in digs, as George Bosworth went to take up his work in a parish, I moved into Wycliffe Hall. This was a theological college in North Oxford which was devoted to teaching theology of a protestant and evangelical character. I did not, however, at this time, have any tuition from the Hall itself as I was still studying through Merton under Green. My mother bought a house for about a thousand pounds in North Oxford—1 Warnborough Road—so I was able to live quite near the family, whom I visited frequently. This year too passed without any very striking outer events and at the end of it I sat for my second final school, which I did with much greater nervousness than before, but again was fortunate enough to get a First.

In 1925 Magdalen College required a Fellow to teach English literature and I applied for the post. Nichol Smith did not think I had very much chance, for among the other candidates was a formidable opponent, the C. S. Lewis who was to become famous as a writer on very varied subjects—literary criticism, religious propaganda and science fiction. He had originally come up in 1917, had some war experience, gained a First in Greats and was considerably more mature than I was at the age of twenty-three. Nichol Smith was right, for Lewis was elected but I was runner-up and got so far as having an interview with the President, Sir Herbert Warren, and being invited to High Table so that the dons could see what my manners were like.

During that dinner at which, so far as I remember, I was surprisingly free from nerves, somebody told the story of the candidates for a Fellowship who were offered stewed cherries as a test. The first spat the stones on to his plate; he was rejected. The second put the stones into his spoon and arranged them neatly on the side of his plate; he too was rejected.

The third swallowed the stones and was unanimously elected, but died of appendicitis before he could take up the appointment.

Another story was going round Oxford at this time about Sir Herbert, who was well known to be one of the greatest snobs living.

Mrs Besant came to Oxford to put her ward, Krishnamurti, into one of the colleges. She naturally went straight to Magdalen and interviewed the President. When Sir Herbert showed some reluctance to accept her candidate, Mrs Besant exclaimed, 'But my ward is a very special person. I don't want to stress it, but he does happen to be the Son of God.'

Sir Herbert replied, 'Madam, we have the sons of many distinguished people in this college.'

Many years later I told this story to Sardar Panikkar, distinguished writer and former Indian Ambassador to France, when he visited Assam as a member of the States Reorganization Commission.

'Where did you hear that?' he said.

I told him that it was an old chestnut from my Oxford days. 'Do you know,' he replied, 'I invented that story myself as a young man when I was hard up in Paris and wanted to earn a little money by writing for the American papers? The story appeared first in America; it was repeated in the *London Times* and so found its way to Oxford.'

I have never been much of a one for taking exercise. Like Sherlock Holmes I have always looked upon aimless bodily exertion as a waste of energy but, unless one was to be thought pansy, one had to put in an appearance on some playing-field. At school I won a copy of *Through the Looking-Glass* as a prize for boxing. Later, however, I came round to Bertie Wooster's opinion that this extravagant exercise was better left to muscular females like Honoria Glossop. My father had been in the Merton boat, but had had the intelligence to obtain the post of cox as I did of goal-keeper in another discipline, thus keeping actual physical exertion to a minimum. By following this sensible policy, I rose ultimately to be Captain of the Merton Second Eleven in soccer. That season was a disastrous one for the College, for my team lost every single match.

usually by about fifteen goals to nil, and I then gave up any pretence of being an athlete.

I liked swimming, however, and was often to be found at Parson's Pleasure, where everyone bathed nude, after which I would float down the river lying comfortably in a punt.

One summer afternoon Bernard Aluwihare and I took Dr Radhakrishnan, now President of India, who was then a Fellow of All Souls, out with us in such a punt. I still remember with shame asking him if he knew anything about comparative religion.

I never smoked at Oxford and drank very little. It was only in my third year that I began to take an occasional beer or shandy, though I used to enjoy wine at College or Club dinners. This, of course, is the proper way to drink—in public and with one's food—and for those of us who come to live in the East, perhaps the change-over from wine to spirits is the most uncivilized of the new habits we adopt.

After going to India and until I was about forty I suffered continually from malaria. I attribute this to the fact that in those days I was a non-smoker. Since I took to cigars (I have never smoked cigarettes) I have not had a single attack of malaria and my general health has greatly improved.

In England and on the Continent the cigar is a mark of the plutocrat—Communist cartoons often picture the capitalist with a large corona in his mouth. But in India, the home-made cigar is really a cheroot and works out a little cheaper than the cigarette.

III

What a lot of time I wasted during my undergraduate days on religion! The narrow ideas that I had then disappeared from my life long ago and I am doubtful whether at any time they did me very much good. But religion was very exciting then and it did, I suppose, provide an alternative interest, taking the place of bridge or racing.

We held prayer-meetings and gave 'squashes'. One would get hold of some distinguished evangelist or orthodox don and

invite twenty to thirty friends, and particularly friends whose souls one desired to cure, to one's rooms. After feeding them with a large tea, which generally included anchovy toast, crumpets and cakes, when they were nicely mellow, the evangelist would give his talk.

A much more ascetic kind of spiritual exercise was held at the Martyrs' Memorial at 8 o'clock on Sunday evenings. Here a little crowd of what were surely rather heroic undergraduates would assemble. Someone would produce a harmonium (and I think this is one of the reasons for my lifelong antagonism to this abominable instrument), hymn-sheets would be handed round and we would embark on an hour's performance of prayer, hymn-singing and sermons. Standing on a rickety chair and shouting at the top of my voice a speech that was supposed to change the lives and outlook of my audience, which often consisted of rather derisive undergraduates, was as brave a thing as I have ever done—and, I fancy, as useless. Through this, however, I found some very true friends, Lindesay Godfrey, Noel Wardle-Harpur and F. W. Dillistone.

Another type of religious enterprise which occupied a lot of my time was concerned with what was known as the OUBU—the Oxford University Bible Union—of which I ultimately became President. This was the successor of the old OICCU (which corresponded to a Cambridge Society with a similar name) which some years earlier had gone off the rails and amalgamated with the Student Christian Movement which we considered 'unsound'. The OUBU, therefore, was the most orthodox and reactionary of all the religious societies in Oxford and, as its name implied, took a four-square stand on the verbal inspiration of the Bible. Meetings used to be held in St Peter's Hall every Friday evening and distinguished visitors as well as members were invited to give addresses. There was hymn-singing and prayers and, though the membership was limited to seventy or eighty undergraduates, it certainly held them together and was the source of inspiration of a certain kind.

Although my actual activities in the religious field for my first three years at Oxford were confined to this sort of thing, I had a great deal to do with the Anglo-Catholics. In Mob Quad my neighbour was Alston Dix, one of the most brilliant young

men I have ever met, who later became a monk—Dom Gregory—and a well-known theologian. Another neighbour was Max Petitpierre, a gangling youth with a heart of gold, immensely pious. There was also a great character who during my first year lived in the rooms which I was to inherit from him—Reggiè Smith, who was a leading personality in the O.U.D.S.; he did a quite wonderful Falstaff.

All these three were Anglo-Catholics and from the very first week they started a campaign to convert me. They used flattery (I was far too good to waste my time on these unintelligent evangelicals), arguments of a kind for which nothing I had learnt at school had prepared me, and much affection. When one of them was arguing with me, another would be on his knees in the bedroom, praying that my heart would be touched. The Anglo-Catholics did one very well and, as I will show, they ultimately succeeded.

Later, towards the end of my time at Oxford, yet another religious influence arrived in the University. This was Frank Buchman and I had the privilege of being present at the very first meeting in Oxford of what was later to be called the Oxford Group and later still Moral Rearmament.

Directly I was introduced to Buchman he pointed his finger at me and exclaimed, 'There is a secret sin in your life.'

There was, of course, but even at that date, simple as I was, I felt it was a little phoney, for it would be a fairly safe bet to say this to anyone in Oxford and hit the mark. I attended two or three of Buchman's meetings for, while I strongly disapproved of the whole thing, they were certainly interesting.

I particularly liked the public confessions which I believe have now disappeared from the programme (a great pity). I remember one little first-year student, innocent as a baby, who, when his turn came to confess, could not think of anything to say and was reduced to admitting that he had once blown his nose on a public towel in the Union bathroom. On another occasion a woman student confessed that she had sinned against morality, whereon a loud trans-Atlantic voice exclaimed: 'Be more explicit, sister.'

Although Buchmanism took some hold in colleges like Worcester and among the Rhodes Scholars, it did not, at least

in my day, have very much real success. It was obviously no use to the Anglo-Catholics and the great authority of Bishop Chavasse condemned it for the evangelicals.

Immediately after I finished my Theology Finals I was appointed Vice-Principal of Wycliffe Hall and a friend of mine, Julian Thornton-Duesbury, who also got a First in the same examination, became Chaplain. A few months later I was ordained in Christ Church Cathedral by Tommy Strong, the Bishop of Oxford, to whom I was greatly devoted and who was, I think, a little fond of me. We used to have fantastically learned talks about the pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite and Caesarius of Heisterbach, though he rarely used words of more than two syllables and gave me a lasting inclination towards simplicity in speech and writing.

Strong was a wonderful friend and guide to young men, but it was generally accepted that, while he was an ideal Dean of Christ Church and Vice-Chancellor of the University, he was less suitable as Bishop of Oxford, for he was bored by public occasions, particularly objecting to those people who specialized in ecclesiastical small talk. He disliked sermons, thought hymns were quite unnecessary and tended to measure the success of a church service by the speed with which it could be brought to a conclusion.

'I think,' writes his biographer, 'that he probably could not really understand why anyone wanted to listen to sermons. They seemed to him to have very little to do with religion.' And he tells how on one occasion, when instituting an incumbent in a small village parish, Strong insisted in robing in the car (which involved something like a wrestle with his chaplain), in order that he might not have to meet the assembled clergy. On arrival at the church, when asked what hymns he would like, he answered: 'No hymns.' He got through the service at breakneck speed, escaped from the procession into his car, shook hands with the new incumbent, said, 'I hope you will be happy,' and rapidly drove away.

Although the habit did not affect me when I was in the Church, it did have considerable delayed-action influence in my later life, revealing itself in a very similar attitude to receptions, committees, and all ceremonial occasions. If I can't get

away, I do what Tommy Strong presumably did not: I sit patiently, reciting to myself the matchless words of the *Dhammapada*—‘All created things are grief and pain: all created things perish; all forms are unreal.’ The unreal things pass away in time.

As Vice-Principal I got a good set of rooms in a wing of the Hall where I was entirely by myself and I had the task of giving regular lectures and holding tutorials, as well as performing the routine duties of an Anglican clergyman.

At Merton I gave a series of lectures on the Epistle of St James. This little-regarded work can be described as an attempt by its author to put the Christian message in a form likely to appeal to Jewish readers—the Jews were to develop along the lines of their own genius; their faith was the ally rather than the rival of Christianity. Thus I was already thinking in terms of a policy which I have followed all my life. In Poona I tried to express Western mysticism in Hindu categories and later among the tribes I have always tried to express the new ideas that the modern world is bringing them in a way that will be familiar and will result in an evolution from their past and not be a break with it. I started, therefore, very early on this sort of thing.

I only stayed for a year as Vice-Principal and outwardly the life was conventional and a little dull. Inwardly, however, it was a time of intense excitement. In the first place, I developed my studies in mysticism and my practice of religion to a greater degree than I had ever attempted before.

I had taken a special paper in the Theology Schools on mysticism with special reference to William Law, and this naturally involved a close study of the works of Jacob Boehme. I was fascinated by Plotinus and once had a talk with Dean Inge about him. I collected an unusual library of mystical books, spending every penny that I could save on them, and I read them voraciously. I was very much in earnest in the search for God. I used to fast every Wednesday and Friday, taking nothing to eat until 7 o'clock in the evening. Sometimes I stayed up all night at prayer and vigil. I was in love with the Beauty ever-ancient, ever-new that centuries ago had stirred the passionate heart of Augustine. ‘The love that moves the sun

and the other stars’ possessed me. In God’s will was my peace, and I cried in the solitude of my room: ‘Thou hast made me for Thyself, and my heart is restless until it can rest in Thee.’

At the same time my old affection for the bad boys of my college grew greater and I had quite a number of them in my confidence. I was also made Chaplain of Merton and used to conduct matins and evensong regularly there in addition to what I did at Wycliffe.

It was thus not unnatural that I should find myself definitely turning to Catholicism, not the real thing, but its substitute in Anglo-Catholicism. I had no objection to Rome, but it was unfamiliar and would have been altogether too much for my dear mother. Anglo-Catholicism had poetry and beauty as well as mysticism of a kind which the evangelical party in the Church of England could not provide.

I made my first confession to Green in Merton Chapel and was so nervous that I went beforehand into the vestry and drank about half a bottle of the communion wine to stimulate me for what seemed to me an appalling review of a sinful life. When I think of it now I am astonished how little there was really to tell—then.

This, of course, put me in a rather difficult position. I was an important official of an institution which represented the spearhead of opposition to the Anglo-Catholic movement. I was expected to teach theology from a particular angle and to give the arguments against the Mass, confession, Mariolatry and other exercises of religion connected with the Church of Rome. Towards the end of my year it became evident that the position was impossible.

In the vacation term of the summer of 1927 the Principal had arranged an expedition to Palestine. The staff and students of the Hall would go and spend a couple of months studying the Bible and its history in the very place where its great events had occurred. For a whole year I had looked forward to this but I felt that it would be wrong for me to take advantage of it and that the path of sincerity demanded that I should resign my post before and not after this adventure. This was certainly a very idealistic way of doing things, but I thought it was right.

I went to see the Principal, Graham-Brown, and had a most

unpleasant interview. 'I have long suspected,' he said, that you have been going to confession,' in the tone of voice that he might have used had he suspected me of visiting brothels. In fact, the attempt of my relations and former colleagues to create a guilt-complex in me over what was after all a struggle for the truth taught me at least one thing—never to interfere with the journey of a soul towards what it believes to be the light. I felt that I was giving a lot of pain to my family and friends and this, for I have always been very sensitive, undoubtedly cast a cloud on what should have been a felicitous progress of the mind and spirit towards reality.

At the end of that summer term, therefore, I found myself without a job and went to live at home with my mother. I was faced with a number of possibilities. I was already Chaplain at Merton and it would not have been difficult to establish my position there. There was a possibility of my going to the House and the offer of a Fellowship at Keble. I was certain of getting something, and something attractive, by the autumn term.

IV

But during the summer vacation I had to face something more than a change of religious allegiance. I had to consider the entire shape of my future life. Until then my path had seemed fairly straightforward. I had done well in Schools; I had been appointed to two Examining Chaplainships; there was talk of Fellowships in three different colleges. We had even bought the house in North Oxford.

But my resignation from Wycliffe Hall set me thinking again. My former tutor, Green, a very wise man who always had a great influence on me, felt strongly that I should not stay in Oxford and insisted that I should go to a parish in the slums of London or one of the industrial cities and live among poor and ordinary people. I did actually try to arrange this but it fell through. Other influences then began to turn my thoughts to India.

I do not think I have loved anything in the world all my life so much as I loved Oxford in those days. It had everything

I wanted and the things I wanted then were not just the temptations of the flesh, a life of comfort and ease. *John Inglesant* was one of the books that influenced me. Oxford offered the search for truth, the dignity and interest of a life of scholarship, friendships of the most stimulating kind, surroundings of great beauty. Yet it did not satisfy me; 'some life of men unblest' troubled me as it had troubled the Scholar Gipsy and driven him into the wilds.

At that time, and, in fact, for many years afterwards, I was completely indifferent to finance. My mother had brought us up to believe that there was something a little undignified about wanting money. The family was not particularly distinguished but I don't think that any of its members had ever gone in for trade. The children of merchants, however wealthy, or of shopkeepers, however charming, were not considered our suitable companions. Although poor mother was continually struggling to make both ends meet, there was a persistent atmosphere that it was not money that brought happiness and that gentlefolk did not really bother about it.

The result was that, although I got some fairly handsome rewards in the way of prizes and scholarships, they didn't affect me very much and I gave whatever I could save to the family. When I was invited to accept the post of Vice-Principal at Wycliffe Hall I never even asked what the emoluments were. Actually they were £200 a year plus board and lodging for about thirty weeks. This looks very little, yet in purchasing power £200 a year in 1927 was probably equal to a thousand rupees a month now. But the point was not whether it was a lot or a little but that I was not in the least concerned about it.

I was also curiously indifferent to ambition, as I have always been. My family never even suggested to me that one should make one's plans with a view to future preferment. The thing to do was quite simply, as we put it at that time, to discover the Will of God and follow it.

My choice, therefore, was simplified to some extent and it was obvious that there was a great deal to be said for India. My family had a very long connexion with the country. Even more impelling was an impulse which was very real indeed at the time and had a strong influence on my thinking.

The Catholic religion lays stress on a spiritual ideal which is known as reparation. Christ made reparation for the sins of the world. The saints through their prayers and sufferings make reparation for their own sins and those of others. During my later years in Oxford this became translated into the desire to make reparation to the poor for the way more privileged people had behaved to them. Now in relation to India I remembered how my family had made its money, such as it was, out of India, and my countrymen had gone to India to exploit it and to rule.

I thought, therefore, that I might go to India as an act of reparation, that from my family somebody should go to give instead of to get, to serve with the poorest people instead of ruling them, to become one with the country that we had helped to dominate and subdue. This idea became sufficiently important to break up my Oxford career and was the driving force that carried me through many difficult years in India.

When I made this decision I felt that I was leaving for ever the life of scholarship and plunging into an unknown world. Had I realized it I was, in fact, stepping on to a path that would offer me infinitely greater opportunities of research than anything I could have found among the books of Oxford. My self-imposed exile enabled me to study endlessly varied human beings along untrodden ways. Fourteen years later Oxford gave me the D.Sc. for these researches.

When I first went up to Oxford I knew nothing about India except what my more conventional relations had taught me. Indians were wogs or natives. They were incapable of self-government and had to be kept in their proper place. In my third year, however, I met Bernard Aluwihare who, although he came from Ceylon and not from India, was an ardent supporter of the Indian national movement and in his own charming person was the best possible antidote to the ideas about Asia in which I had been brought up. He introduced me to the writings of Tagore and the opinions of Gandhi. He lent me books on Indian philosophy and gradually changed my entire outlook.

I became fired by the ideals of Indian nationalism: in particular, the personality of Gandhi absorbed my attention. Hindu

mysticism greatly attracted me. I did not know many Indian students but among them was a boy from St John's, who was later to play an important part in the life of India, Jaipal Singh, already famous as a distinguished athlete.

In my fifth year and during the year I was teaching in North Oxford other influences strengthened my interest in India. A gentle and spiritual Christian ascetic, the Sadhu Sunder Singh, visited Oxford and made a deep impression on many of us. Professor Heiler visited the University a little later and gave some lectures: he was, I think, the first German theologian to come to Oxford after the War and, as he had written a book on the Sadhu, we had interesting discussions about the mysticism of East and West. Then came Jack Winslow.

V

Father Jack Winslow was the founder of an ashram-settlement called the Christa Seva Sangh. He had been a missionary in western India for many years, but after a time had decided to break away from conventional ecclesiastical activity in order to identify himself more closely with the poor and with Indian nationalism and culture. There was a great deal to Winslow. He had studied certain aspects of Indian mysticism and made them his own. He knew a lot about yoga in theory and practice. He might have been a great Christian leader. He certainly was a powerful Christian stimulant—but subsequent history proved that you cannot live on cocktails. At all events he captivated me and others with a vision of what Christianity might be once it became truly oriental in character.

I took to this new idea with enthusiasm and before I had left England I had made some study of Hindu philosophy and religion and had worked out various ways in which Christian architecture, art, philosophy, mysticism and worship could be approximated to the oriental model. Even today, when these things, I am afraid, are not so important to me as they once were, I believe that the suggestions I made then were valid.

The Christa Seva Sangh was founded to explore the possibilities of the reorientalization of the Christian religion. This

was no new thing. Father Stevens, the Jesuit, one of the first Englishmen to come to India, wrote a version of the Bible in the form of a Purana. The Abbé Dubois lived and dressed in Indian style and is said to have composed a supplement to the Vedas proving the truth of Christian doctrine. In more modern times, the well-known Bombay historian, Father Heras, had worked at the indianization of Church architecture.

The Christa Seva Sangh set out ambitiously enough to develop this, though it did not carry on long enough to have much effect.

Two of my best friends—one from Oxford, Oliver (Bernard) Fielding-Clarke, and the other from Cambridge, Algy Robertson—were attracted by Winslow's plan, and in the summer of 1927 resolved that they would join him and help to build up the small Order which he had founded in Poona. After a long struggle I finally decided to go with them.

This meant more than merely leaving Oxford for an unknown India. It also implied that there was a serious possibility that we would become monks, ultimately taking vows of poverty, celibacy and obedience. For about three years we were all very serious about this and Algy continued as a monk or, rather as a sort of friar to the end of his life, though Bernard and I both for various reasons gave up the idea.

Fortunately my mother, though she disliked the 'monkish' side, did not object to my going abroad, and Eldyth was keen on it. Gandhi's ideas, while irritating enough to the British politicians and the orthodox bishops, were proving rather stimulating to the more unconventional. My mother, for example, whom one would not have thought likely to be attracted by one who was in some ways a rival and critic of Christianity, became interested in Gandhi, and five years later when he visited England for the Round Table Conference and he went to visit her in her house at Oxford, she became enthusiastic. She carried on a lengthy correspondence with his secretary, a remarkable man called Mahadev Desai, and was perhaps typical of many who were attracted by the new Indian political philosophy.

The deep impression that Gandhi made on my mother is revealed in a letter which she wrote to me many years later

after receiving the news of his assassination. 'What a great soul has left this poor, sad, struggling world and what a picture of sacrifice and endurance—great and wonderful courage—and what love. I shall ever remember his look and smile of love, not a "put on" one. The misery of his people, whose hope he was, breaks my heart. The despair of those masses on their terrible march! It is like a fantastic nightmare to think of them and a wicked cruel thing.'

My mother described how she had just gone into lunch when someone, who had heard the news on the radio, announced the tragedy and she came away weeping, for it was impossible for her to eat. 'I have rarely', she said, 'felt such a shock and grief. Bapu is now called the greatest man in the world. What a mockery from those who so often nailed him to the cross!'

After deciding to join the erratic, but devoted, company of the c s s I busily got ready to go to India. I received no money from the Society. Indeed, the idea was that we would get no money for we should not need it, and if we had any we should in any case have to hand it over, since we would not be allowed to have private possessions. In actual fact, I was, by the end of my time at Oxford, almost penniless and in considerable difficulty until we left. The Society bought us third-class tickets by rail across Europe and then on a French passenger boat leaving Genoa for Colombo. Third-class passengers who, before being allowed on board, were examined for venereal disease, were herded into cabins of six or eight at a time. We were incredibly uncomfortable but each of us saw himself as a young apostle braving all discomforts and we were carried along on a wave of excitement.

Saints and Satyagrahis

*Look East, where whole new thousands are !
In Vishnu-land what Avatar ?*

—Browning

I

WE arrived at Colombo on November 30th 1927 and after a few days in Ceylon, during which we visited Kandy, we went up to Malabar. How thrilling it was to stand at last on Indian soil which to my youthful and romantic imagination was sacred, hallowed by the feet of countless saints, mystics and seekers after truth. How beautiful it was—Malabar in early December, fresh and green. I had read of the dirt, the squalor, poverty and ignorance of India, and I remember how astonished I was at the cleanliness, the people well-fed and well-dressed, and the thousands of boys and girls pouring into the schools. I was to see poverty in plenty later on, but not at first.

The reason we broke our journey here was to go on pilgrimage to a small monastery among the hills which had been established by a bishop of one of the Eastern Churches, Mar Ivanios, a man of singular devotion. It was run on primitive Franciscan lines and we were all deeply impressed by the simplicity, discipline and joy of the monks there. This was the kind of life I wanted and expected: I certainly had no idea of the strange experiences that were waiting for me. At this time in fact I shrank from politics, unaware that soon they would become, and would remain, a major interest. It never occurred to me that I could actually meet and talk to Gandhi: I had not realized how accessible India's leaders were. I had no idea of India's tribes, though they were all round me in Malabar. This

was probably the one time in my life when Goodness had priority over Truth, Love or Beauty as my central aim.

Then we travelled by train across India to Poona, where we found a disconcertingly conventional group of buildings in the middle of a large field on the outskirts of the town, very near the Agricultural College, with Father Winslow and some Indian brothers of the Christa Seva Sangh to greet us. We immediately settled down to a rather odd life, certainly very odd by the standards of 1927 when Englishmen, especially the clergy, were expected to behave properly. We slept on the floor and, in fact, since there was practically no furniture, we did everything on the floor, which was very much in line with the practice of Hindu homes in western India at that time. We ate Indian food (with dispensation for invalids) and were rather particular about the way this was served, in the proper dishes—big brass plates, with a number of little pots—and the ceremonial washing of the hands before and after meals. We naturally removed our sandals whenever we entered a building. The regular dress of members of the Sangh was white khadi made into a 'habit' and those who had taken preliminary vows were entitled to wear saffron girdles.

Winslow was an excellent linguist and he insisted that we should give first priority to learning the Marathi which was spoken all round us. For this purpose the Sangh employed a number of pandits who came over from the city to teach us. I was fortunate in having a wonderful old Brahmin, H. V. Harshe, who was the embodiment of the best kind of traditional Hinduism. We spent most of my language-lessons discussing Hindu mysticism and philosophy with the result that after six months I knew the Marathi or Sanskrit words for most of the higher spiritual states, yogic postures and exercises but I was quite incapable of ordering lunch at a railway station.

Our inner lives were in a state of constant turmoil and excitement, but the first external event of note was a visit to Sabarmati in January 1928. Bombay has always been a cosmopolitan and liberal city and a number of intellectuals there had recently started a branch of the Inter-Religious Fellowship—the President was the veteran Professor P. A. Wadia. This body met regularly in Bombay for what were called non-denominational

prayers and once a year had a conference which was attended by adherents of all religions. In 1928 the venue of the conference was in Mahatma Gandhi's ashram at Sabarmati near Ahmedabad.

From the moment of my arrival there I was doomed. For long a sympathetic fellow-traveller, I now became an ardent disciple. At this time, the national movement of India had risen to a pitch of sincerity and devotion that has rarely been equalled in the political upheavals of the world. The ashram itself, standing on the tall banks of the Sabarmati river, was the home of some hundreds of people marked by that quiet and disciplined devotion to hard work and to the poor which was then characteristic of the best type of Congressman. Among them Gandhi walked in almost unearthly dignity and beauty. That was the first thing that struck me about him—his beauty, and the inner spiritual power that transformed his frail body and filled the entire place with kindness and love.

The impact of those few days at Sabarmati was extraordinary. It was as if I had suddenly been reborn as an Indian on Indian soil. Everything fell into place so naturally that I did not, I think, realize at first how very serious was the new attitude I adopted or what the consequences would be.

At first I did not see the conflict as between India and Britain but rather as between two different kinds of people. My theme was freedom and this was not confined to India. The prize-essay on the poetry of revolution which I wrote at Oxford had shown me how many Europeans, and particularly how many of the English poets, had treasured liberty. Many of the ideas inspiring India's national movement came originally from the West. Tolstoy and Ruskin had a profound influence on Gandhi. The first result of my contact with him, therefore, was to put me among those Europeans, those Englishmen, to whom colonialism or imperialism was intolerable, to whom the freedom of subject peoples everywhere was a passion, a consuming ideal.

I do not remember that this set up any conflict or caused me anguish of spirit. After I had met Gandhi it seemed to be the only possible attitude. This may seem surprising but it was, I suppose, easier for me because at that time I hardly knew any

Europeans in India. I belonged to no club which might have boycotted me for my opinions. I had never met a British official (except one or two Anglican bishops) and many of my friends in England, with whom I corresponded, were themselves inclined to a liberal attitude towards India's cause.

Later, as the struggle developed, I became more aware of the implications of my new devotion to Gandhi and his movement. As I gradually met more English people and some officials it was impressed on me, not always very kindly, how badly, from their point of view, I had gone off the rails. This was sometimes embarrassing, occasionally distressing, but the idea of freedom is so intoxicating, to work for it is so rewarding that I cannot say that I minded very much.

Perhaps I only fully realized the implications of my association with the national movement much later, when at a lunch party of British officials in Jubbulpore at the height of the Second World War my host asked me what I would do if India became an independent country and war broke out between her and Britain. 'That is the real test,' he said, 'of anyone who takes the Indian side.' I replied that in any case I did not believe in war, but in such a situation I would certainly be for India. I can still remember the hush of shocked incredulity that fell on the table, and I realized that these good people were obviously thinking that here was a potential traitor whom it would be rather embarrassing to shoot. Yet I could never think of myself really as a traitor but rather as someone who was loyal to the highest principles which Britain herself had taught the world.

I have, I am afraid, gone too far ahead in my chronology: I must come back to the early years. After Sabarmati and its stirring consequences, the next dramatic event in my life was that I very nearly died. All through 1928 I was undoubtedly playing with my health. I not only sat and slept on the floor. I went a little further and sat and slept on a cement floor with nothing to protect me but a thin piece of sacking. I gave up my mattress and even my pillows in an ardour for self-discipline. I went barefoot, ate anything I was given. This was all right during the earlier part of the year but, when the hot weather, which at least kept the cement warm, yielded to the rains, it

should have been obvious to anybody but a young idiot that what he was doing was very silly. Someone remarked that I was only kept going by Wodehouse, whisky and the Holy Ghost.

The result was that, despite these prophylactics, I developed dysentery in an acute form, was rushed to hospital and for six weeks hovered, as they say, between life and death. I was unconscious for part of the time and only those who have had a severe attack of dysentery in the days before the new antibiotics were invented, will know the intense pain and appalling exhaustion it caused. Telegrams were sent to my family in England preparing them for the worst and I was told (afterwards) that suitable arrangements had been made with the local undertaker. The Bishop of Bombay came to give me the last rites—Extreme Unction, which prepares the soul for death.

At the same time the bishop, Palmer of Balliol who possessed to the full the Oxford blend of idealism and commonsense, brought three bottles of champagne under his cassock and persuaded the doctors that this was really the best thing they could give me. Even if it failed to keep me alive, he pointed out, it would dispatch me on my long journey in the right mood. In actual fact, I suspect that the bishop's champagne saved my life. From the very first glass I began to mend and within a month I was tottering about, extremely weak but fit to go on living.

But the Poona doctors were emphatic that I would need a full year of convalescence and it was decided that the best thing for me to do would be to return to Oxford and do a little research there in the hope that I would be able to come back again to India at the end of that period.

II

This year in England was a profitable one. I spent almost all the time in Oxford in my mother's house and this gave me the opportunity to read widely in the Bodleian and other libraries. In fact, I hardly did anything else except read and write and I actually produced three small books. One was a study of mysticism in a book which I called *Christian Dhyana*. This is

an account of an anonymous fourteenth-century mystical classic, *The Cloud of Unknowing*, a book which, as I wrote, 'might have been written by some Christian Sadhu, so entirely does it express that rhythmic philosophy, that deep, slow breath of thought characteristic of the East. How to be free from petty mundane distractions, how to be purified from the sin that separates, how to unify and concentrate the mind, how to discipline the self and bring it to perfection and to God—such urgent and practical questions are asked by all lovers of the Infinite. In *The Cloud of Unknowing* the answer will be found.'

A second was a little book called *Studies in the Gospels* which I had been asked to write by the Inter-Religious Fellowship; similar studies of the *Koran* and the *Bhagavad-Gita*, the latter by C. Rajagopalachari, appeared at about the same time. My book was exceptional in that I illustrated many of the gospel-passages by quotations from such liberal Hindu writers as Keshab Chandra Sen, Ram Mohan Roy and others.

The third book, which I did not complete immediately, though I collected all the materials, was a study of the English mystic, Richard Rolle, whose message I tried to express in terms of Hindu *bhakti*. Later, in Karanjia, I wrote a companion book on St Francis of Assisi, whose life and message I also tried to interpret in Indian terms.

In the autumn of 1929 I was considered well enough to return to India and I travelled, first to Assisi and then, in the agreeable company of Leonard Schiff, to Palestine.

After going to Assisi I visited a group of Italian Sisters in a beautiful little convent among the olive-trees high up in the hills not far away. For some time past these Sisters, who formed an unconventional community of women who lived according to the primitive Franciscan rule in complete poverty and had an intense sympathy for Gandhi and India, had corresponded with me. They sent me a special blessing, which I have quoted in *Leaves from the Jungle*, but which I will give again here, for at one time it brought us a great deal of comfort, especially the bit about *funzionari noiosi*.

*State sani e allegri,
senza troppo caldo,
senza patire la pioggia,*

*senza zanzare,
senza colera e malaria
e altre malattie,
senza funzionari noiosi
e altre persone moleste,
senza scrupoli e malinconie,
in pace, libertà e fortezza.*

May you be fit and cheerful,
free from excessive heat,
free from the pouring rain,
free from gnats,
free from cholera and malaria
and other diseases,
free from troublesome officials
and other tiresome persons,
without doubts or sadness,
in peace, freedom and strength.

Here was the Catholic ideal at its purest and best and I count myself very fortunate that at this time of my life I had the opportunity of seeing this in Europe and Hindu life at its purest and best in Gandhi's Sabarmati.

The visit to Palestine was most enjoyable. We were well escorted by an eccentric but knowledgeable Anglican clergyman who had spent many years in the country. In Jerusalem and Bethlehem I lived in a rapture of spiritual excitement and spent many hours in the holy places, and specially in the great Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Later we went out into the wilderness of Judea and visited a number of monasteries and churches of the Orthodox Church, one of which was built on the very face of a precipice: we could look down through a crack in the floor to the rocks hundreds of feet below. The régime of these monasteries was severe and their great religious celebrations began about two o'clock in the morning and lasted till dawn. But the singing was so beautiful and the whole setting so romantic that one forgot to be tired, and at five in the morning we were taken into a little vestry and revived with fried eggs and vodka.

From Palestine we went on to India and reached Poona at

the end of November. We found that the Christa Seva Sangh had now become, both in appearance and organization, much more of a real monastery or ashram. It was a pretty place and was running in a more ordered fashion.

Almost immediately, however, Winslow decided to go on leave and, rather to my dismay (for I was far too young), left me in charge. This had an unexpected result. Winslow was very sympathetic to India's desire for freedom, but he belonged to the ranks of those liberal-minded Englishmen who talked about fulfilling India's legitimate aspirations, which could mean almost anything according to the interpretation you put on the word 'legitimate'. He had always managed to keep in with both parties to this great dispute.

When he left we rather let ourselves go: with the cat away the mice had a great time. I hoisted the revolutionary tricolour over the ashram on the plea that since the Anglican cathedral in Bombay flew the Union Jack from its spire there was no reason why we should not fly the flag of India. The real crisis, however, came not through anything I did myself but from a lecture which I arranged to be given in the ashram hall.

At this time the press was excited by the appearance in India of a young Englishman who was chosen by Gandhi to be the bearer of one of his famous letters to the Viceroy. Gandhi's emissary, with his flaxen hair and khaki shorts, breaking into the world of immaculately dressed A.D.C.'s, excited public imagination almost as much as the half-naked fakir striding up the steps of Viceregal Lodge to parley with the King's Representative on equal terms. He was Reginald Reynolds, who later married Ethel Mannin, wrote a history of water-closets and became my very dear friend. At that time Reginald, like myself, suffered from the unpardonable crime of youth. Nothing he said could be correct; nothing he did could be proper, because he was young. In his untimely death a few years ago he finally paid his debt to the enthusiasms of his younger days.

At that time I hardly knew who Reginald Reynolds was. But when he wrote to me asking for the hospitality of the ashram for a few days on his way to England, I naturally sent him, as I sent everybody, a warm invitation to stay with us. He came and charmed us all by his simplicity and wit. I asked him to

give a lecture in the ashram on the Gandhian philosophy, and he gave an unusually fine address to a great crowd of people, in which he stressed those aspects of Gandhi's teaching which make for international peace and national progress. There was not a word in the speech that could not have been delivered in any cathedral in England.

But this was too much for Government, and they at last got busy. I was expecting the police, which shows how little I knew about the Church of England. What I got, of course, was the Archdeacon. He wrote to me saying that Government was seriously upset at our entertaining a person like Reginald Reynolds, and asking for an explanation of my conduct. There was not much that *could* be explained, but I remember saying how astonishing I found it that this question should be raised by a representative of the Church instead of the C.I.D.

After this I was chased by the police and shadowed by chaplains of the Establishment.

It says much, however, for the Christa Seva Sangh that it did not allow the constant pressure from the Church leaders and increasing vexations from the C.I.D. to turn it aside from what it felt to be right. With the full approval of the other members, for example, I entertained Subhas Chandra Bose and at the end of 1930 I was allowed to accept an invitation from Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, later Home Minister in the Government of independent India to visit Gujarat and make an inquiry into police repression of the No-Tax Campaign that had been started there.

This campaign was on a very wide scale, and the Government had taken strong measures to counter it, so strong indeed that in many places almost the whole population had migrated into the neighbouring Baroda State. I visited over sixty villages in five talukas—Anand, Nadiad, Borsad, Bardoli and Jalalpur—and wrote a report which appeared first in the *Bombay Chronicle* and later as a small booklet, *In the Deserted Villages of Gujarat*. I was then, of course, still a Christian clergyman, and I wrote very strongly, appealing to the 'Christian' Government to observe the principles of its own professed religion.

'Surely,' I said, 'it is possible to meet even such an emergency as this by methods which are true to the principles of Law and

Justice, Righteousness and Humanity, and not by those which betray them.

'I would urge on all my fellow-Christians who read these pages, not least on any English Government servants, if they have the good fortune to meet their eye, that the principles of Christ apply equally to public and private life . . . If they would put all they know of the principles of Christ into the conduct of public affairs in Gujarat, then whatever the issue of the present struggle may be, they will have preserved intact the authority of Law, the sanctity of Justice and left behind no heritage of bitter memories.'

In Poona we used to conclude the morning and evening worship with the ancient Indian prayer: 'From the unreal lead me to the real: from darkness lead me to light; from death lead me to deathlessness.' Bernard Fielding-Clarke, a strong socialist in outlook, once remarked on the very different meanings this had for him and for me: for me, he said, it was obviously the desire to penetrate beyond or through the unreal transitory world to the eternal reality; for him it was the struggle away from the unreality of a life of social, political or even religious interests to the harsh realities of misery and pain. This was probably true when I first came to India, but very soon I was interpreting the verse just as Bernard did and I still do so, though I take both meanings now and look for the treasure of the true reality behind all appearance, as well as the reality of poverty and suffering.

III

While I was in Poona the ashram attracted to its membership a number of remarkable Indians, among whom was one who was to be my lifelong friend and ally. This was Shamrao Hivale, whose name appears frequently in these pages.

Shamrao was about six months younger than me, yet directly he came to the ashram he took me under his wing, initiated me into Indian ways, looked after me and probably saved my life by rushing me to hospital when I fell ill. He is a person of unusual attractiveness with a smile that charms everybody. He

has 'a tamelessness of soul' that draws people to him. Like his brother, the late Dr B. P. Hivale who became famous in western India as the founder of a flourishing college in Ahmednagar, he has great determination and usually gets his way. He had long dreamt of going to England and finally persuaded the c s s to send him to Mirfield, a theological seminary of the Anglo-Catholic persuasion, where he remained for about a year. Before going there he had accompanied me on the Gujarat inquiry and when he returned from England, at the time I left the c s s, he went with me to the North-West Frontier. After this we planned everything together and worked together for many years until I went to NEFA. It was not easy in those days for an Englishman (as I still was) to find his way about outside the narrow circle of the sahibs and I could have done little had I not had Shamrao with me. He was (and is) a wonderful companion and his simplicity of heart and unfailing cheerfulness carried us through many difficulties.

IV

The years 1928 to 1932, during which I was closely in contact with Gandhi and his followers, were critical for India's future. It was now that the old national demand for dominion status was abandoned in favour of a demand for complete independence. It was now that Nehru clarified and proclaimed his views on republicanism and socialism and the Congress gradually found itself committed to a socialist pattern of society.

From 1928 onwards there was a great change in the people of India. There was a stir among the peasants; industrial workers began to organize themselves. Vallabhbhai Patel came into prominence and started the first of his anti-Government campaigns in Gujarat. The provocation of the Simon Commission, which had come to India at the end of the previous year, roused the intellectuals and the younger generation. Shortly after my first visit to Sabarmati Lala Lajpat Rai was beaten up by the police in Lahore and died. A few weeks later Nehru too was beaten in Lucknow. Terrorist activities began in the Punjab and Bengal.

Government's reaction was severe and as Civil Disobedience spread throughout the country thousands went to jail. In December 1929 the annual meeting of the National Congress was held at Lahore with Nehru as President. Impatient with the dilatory and unfulfilled promises of the British Government, on January 26, 1930 millions of people throughout India recited the first Independence pledge:

We believe that it is the inalienable right of the Indian people, as of any other people, to have freedom and to enjoy the fruits of their toil and have the necessities of life, so that they may have full opportunities of growth. We believe also that if any Government deprives a people of these rights and oppresses them, the people have a further right to alter it or to abolish it.

The following year public imagination was captured by Gandhi's march to Dandi to break the salt laws. He was arrested on May the 5th, Nehru having been jailed three weeks earlier, and now Civil Disobedience became very widespread. Nearly a hundred thousand people went to jail and the Government became seriously alarmed. I remember Emerson, then Home Secretary to the Government of India, telling me a little later that nothing had disturbed him more than the great awakening among Indian women and the part that they had begun to play in politics. The whole of India was in a ferment and the movement spread even to the North-West Frontier.

Motilal Nehru died in February 1931 and later in the same month Gandhi, who was always seeking for peace, began talks with Lord Irwin. The British people, however, were still under the influence of the old imperialist ideas and, although the kindly Lord Irwin did everything possible to find a settlement, not very much progress was made. It was, however, decided that everything should be discussed at a Round Table Conference in London and on August 29th Gandhi left India to take part in it. At the end of December he returned and on January 4th, 1932, he was, as I shall describe later, arrested and remained in jail for many long months.

During these years my association with the Christa Seva Sangh was gradually waning, and I paid a number of visits to the Sabarmati ashram.

For my first long stay there I was lucky to get a room in

Gandhi's own house. From the cottage I looked out across the great expanse of sand and water of the Sabarmati river. On the further bank I could see in panorama many of the forces against which Gandhi was in revolt. There were the tall chimneys of the factories which were helping to destroy the hand-spinning industry. There was the palace of the Collector, symbol of a foreign domination which had sapped the manliness of India. There was the railway which, in Gandhi's view, had done so much to ruin the quiet peasant life of the villages. Opposite were the low roofs of the simple dwellings of the ashram. The forces of the world and the forces of the spirit were here in vivid symbol arrayed against one another—machine-force against soul-force, force of arms against love-force. At the time of my first visit, the river was slowly rising: soon the dry and barren sand-hills would disappear, and what all through the hot weather had been a tiny stream would soon be a great and irresistible torrent. 'Is this too a symbol?' I wrote, for I was young then. 'Is a new civilization based on love and justice and sacrifice, about to flow down from the hills of God into the arid desert of our modern world?'

The programme of the ashram was a strenuous one. The rising bell went at 4 o'clock in the morning and was followed, twenty minutes later, by prayers, in the open air whenever possible, which lasted for about an hour. At 6.0 there was a light breakfast—a cup of milk and a piece of bread—and then during the morning there was a succession of engagements, including classes in spinning, carding and Hindi. At 10.0, everyone went for their baths and washed their clothes, for there was no one to perform this duty for you. At 10.45 there was the midday meal of chapatis, boiled vegetables and curds.

Then again from 12.30 to 5 there was a programme of weaving and spinning. There were sometimes lectures on technique but at least two hours were spent hard at work in the weaving shed and another hour in spinning. At 5.30 there was the evening meal of chapatis, boiled vegetables, a little rice and milk, some fruit. This was followed at 6.15 by the evening walk, which for me was always a time of excitement as we used to go in a group round Gandhi and he would single us out one by one for conversation. At 7.30 there were the evening prayers,

followed by a period of recreation, and at 9 o'clock the bell called us to bed.

It was exactly like being back at school again. I went in terror of being late: Gandhi (whom we usually called Bapu) compared the events of the day to a railway-train—if you arrive late at the station, you miss the train; if you arrive late for a meal, you miss the meal. The discipline was very strict. There was a roll-call at the morning and evening prayers, and in the evening we had to say how much yarn we had spun during the day. My name was called along with the students'. There were about 150 people, boys and girls, men and women, both married and unmarried, when I was there. The strictest chastity both outside (naturally) but even within the marriage tie, was enjoined. The ashram was, in fact, an interesting experiment in co-monasticism: how far it worked I would not like to say.

The chief features of the life were given as Body-labour (everyone was expected to do eight hours' work a day), Economy (expenses were reduced to Rs 12 a month, and no private property was permitted), Discipline, Cleanliness, Punctuality. Full members took six vows—Truth, Ahimsa (Love), Celibacy, Control of the Palate, Non-stealing (in the sense that it is theft if we have articles which we do not really need) and Non-possession.

Bapu once told me that he found Control of the Palate the most difficult of these vows for, he confessed, in a rather shy whisper, he loved good food. And in Gujarat the best Indian vegetarian food is quite wonderful.

Bapu himself set the pace. He adopted manual labour and filled his life with ceaseless toil. He reduced his food to the smallest quantity possible. His clothing was that of the poorest peasant. I once had the honour of washing his famous loin-cloth and I was able to see how the very minimum of cloth was used, even the ends being cut away to provide handkerchiefs. He always travelled third-class. He exercised no copyright over his many books. His cottage at Sabarmati, his hut at Keradi where he was arrested, were plain, sparsely-furnished dwellings where his humblest followers could feel at home. He wrote his countless letters on tiny scraps of paper, used with rigid

economy. For him simplicity of living was a religious adventure, an act of worship.

Bapu's asceticism did not express itself in sitting on a bed of spikes, but in the careful keeping of accounts.

Soon afterwards I wrote, rather poetically: 'Bapu's asceticism is of the open air. See him asleep beneath the stars, restful and calm. I associate him with growing flowers, fresh fruit, the wide and open river, the prayer before the morning star has risen, the walk in the unsullied air of dawn.'

I enjoyed my experiences in the spinning and carding classes and in the weaving shed. It was all very new to me, this body-labour, but it was enthralling, the triumph of drawing a perfect thread of even count, the excitement of seeing the white fleecy cloud of cotton rise up under the twanging carding-bow, the struggle with the complex processes of weaving, and the pleasure of watching the cloth grow beneath one's hand. I wish now that I had kept it up. It would have been as soothing as cigars.

Here I saw Bapu from yet another angle—as the monastic founder and spiritual director. On the way to see the Viceroy, he would be writing endless notes of spiritual advice to members of the ashram. He knew them all, heard their confessions, gave them counsel, was always at their service. 'I went to him', a boy of seventeen told me, 'and told him all the bad things in my life, and what a relief I felt when the burden of my sin was removed.' To one who asked advice about his life-work, he said, 'Seek first Truth, and everything else will come to you.' He was very stern, made tremendous demands, yet was sure to understand. He had the power of giving himself completely even to the apparently unimportant.

A few years earlier, Miss Slade, who soon became famous in India under her new name, Mirabehn, had joined the ashram at the inspiration of Romain Rolland.

She was a talented and attractive girl of colossal determination and came of a distinguished naval family, but by the time I reached the ashram she had cut off all her beautiful hair.

Bapu regarded her as his daughter and I was greatly excited one day in 1930 when he said to me, 'As Mirabehn is my

daughter, so you shall be my son.' From that day I regarded myself as a citizen of India.

It was Mirabehn who looked after me. I told Bapu that I really could not say prayers at 4.20 in the morning unless I had a cup of tea. I believe I was one of the very few people who ever got the necessary dispensation and Mirabehn used to provide me with the healing brew.

My great trial in the ashram was the visitors. My room had windows with bars to them instead of glass, giving the impression that one was in a sort of cage. Crowds of visitors came daily to the ashram, and they all came to look at me, peering through the bars. I might be sleeping, or dressing, or eating, it didn't matter. And they often mistook me for Mirabehn who, with her shaven head, looked a little masculine, while I, in my flowing robes, might have been anything. You heard them gather at the window, they lifted up the children to see better. There was a pause while they drank me in. And then a whisper: 'To think that is the daughter of an English Admiral!'

We all had to do our turn as sweepers, and one of the attractive things about the ashram was that there were no futile lavatory inhibitions. Bapu had no sense of smell and when he did his inspections, Mirabehn, and sometimes I too, went with him so that our more sensitive noses might report on the sanitary conditions.

Looking back I feel, though I did not feel so at the time, that there was far too much stress on celibacy. Husbands and wives had to live together as brothers and sisters and this put a great strain on their nerves. Sexual irregularities were treated with a severity out of all proportion. On one occasion I was present when Bapu held an inquisition on an unhappy young couple who had fallen into sin. I remember he began, 'In my own experience in South Africa . . .' but Mrs Gandhi, who was there, said, 'No, no, no, you can leave that alone.'

The way things went to excess is illustrated by a curious incident in Bombay. One day I went to lunch with Mirabehn who was staying in a flat overlooking the sea. We were having a pleasant talk when the food was brought in and spread on the floor, whereupon Mirabehn got up and shut the windows.

I protested, for it was very hot, but she said sternly, 'No, Verrier, the sea-breeze carries particles of salt. These will fall on our food and it will make it more difficult for you to control your passions.'

Bapu himself, however, thought of everything in terms of Truth. At the beginning of 1933 I nearly got married and I wrote to Bapu, who was then in the Yeravda jail, to tell him so. He sent me this affectionate and characteristic reply:

My dearest son,

Son you have become of your own choice. I have accepted the responsible position. And son you shall remain to the end of time. The tie between you and me is much thicker and tougher than blood. It is the burning love of Truth at any cost. Therefore, whatever you will do will not disappoint me. But I was sad.

I am not thinking of superiority of celibacy over marriage. I am thinking of what you had intended, almost pledged yourself to be. But I know that you had to be true to yourself and appear as you were.

He went on, however, to give his blessings to the marriage, which never actually came off, but ended by saying that if I did decide not to marry, 'Your love of Truth will transmute your desire for exclusive marriage into the universal marriage with Truth. In this divine marriage we men and women are all women and Truth is the only lord, master and husband.'

V

I did not keep very many personal recollections of those days, but here is an account of a journey in 1931.

Three small third-class carriages were reserved on the night-train for Bombay. I arrived first on the platform: then Mirabehn turned up with a sick boy and a sick woman whom Bapu was taking for treatment to Bombay. Then Pyarelal arrived with a bus-load of luggage, piles and piles of it, boxes of files, rolls of bedding and baskets of food, spinning-wheels, water-pots—it was all cascaded into the tiny carriage. Finally

at the last moment, Bapu and Mrs Gandhi with Jamnalal Bajaj and the secretaries arrived. No one knew that Bapu was going, so there was no demonstration, though about a hundred people gathered round the carriage. There was no shouting as the train left the station. Directly we were on the move, Bapu got up and told us that his day of silence had begun and would continue till the following evening. Mirabehn had just made his bed, and he went straight to it. Within five minutes he was fast asleep. The rest of us tossed about on the hard narrow seats till midnight. At every station someone had to get up and guard the windows to prevent people waking Bapu up. Old women want to touch his head; others want to give him presents, or they thrust lanterns into the carriage and just look at him. It was a beautiful thing to see his peaceful childlike sleep, undisturbed by the jolting train, or by the memory of the endless files that were piled up around him.

At four we all got up for prayers, and in the darkness as the train rushed onward, the familiar songs were sung, and the verses from the *Bhagavad-Gita*—about control of mind and body, and the peace that comes from it, were recited.

I stayed a few days in Bombay. On the last morning about six-thirty as I was preparing to catch the eight o'clock train to Poona, a phone message came to say that I was to go round to Laburnum Road at once to see Bapu. This sounded very important, so I went round immediately and went upstairs.

It was the day of critically important All-India Congress Committee meetings. Bapu was sitting in a tiny room talking to some man who was involved in trouble with the police. He had an air of repose and calm such as you or I might possibly obtain on a good holiday.

I waited a little, and then he said that he had sent for me because he knew I was in perplexity about my future, and he had thought that he might perhaps be of use to me. It was just then that I was thinking so hard about my relations with c s s of which Mirabehn had told him something. He had it all in his mind—and on such a day. Then for twenty minutes he talked to me about the whole business with the most perfect tact and understanding, giving several examples from his own career. He told me of his own relations with the Servants of India Society, and why he did not join them.

'If you are doubtful of your position in a Society,' he said 'tell them the worst about yourself. Even exaggerate the diffi-

culties. Then if they will swallow that, you will be all right.' 'It is normally a good rule not to go till you are turned out.' 'But you musn't have a constant burden on your mind, the thought that you are embarrassing your Society. Even if the thought is imaginary, it is very real in its effects. If I imagine a ghost in my room—even if there is not a ghost in the whole world—I shall be unable to sleep. And this ghost you must lay. Smite it, kill it—no room for Ahimsa here.' Finally he urged me to go to Almora in the Himalayas, and recover my health fully, at his own expense.

My experiences during these months were decisive for my whole life. I came to the conclusion that I must leave the Christa Seva Sangh and go to live in some very poor village where I would be in closest contact with the people. The prayer 'Lead me from the unreal to the real' had taken its new meaning. At that time I thought of going to the untouchables, and to Gujarat.

But Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel persuaded me against this. 'The untouchables', he said, 'are not your problem. They are the sin of the Hindus, and it is the Hindus who must make reparation to them.' He also pointed out that Gujarat was already full of social workers and missionaries, and I should find it very difficult to establish myself in a clear field. This I should find among the tribal people.

One day as I was driving through the streets of Ahmedabad with Sardar Vallabhbhai and Seth Jamnalal Bajaj, I heard for the first time in my life—from the lips of Jamnalal—the magic word 'Gond'.

'Why don't you come to the Central Provinces,' he said, 'and do something for a tribe which is almost entirely neglected both by national workers and by missionaries?'

I liked what Jamnalal had to tell me about the Gonds, and decided to visit their country before the end of the year.

In the meantime I had written to Shamrao in England, telling him of my plans and asking him if he would join me. We were still, it must be remembered, thinking of ourselves as members of the Church, and Shamrao still hoped to be ordained. To join me at that moment meant cutting short his training in England. Our idea was that we would live together

in a small ashram in a Gond village. We would identify ourselves with the positive aspects of the national movement. We would continue to be members of the Church, and would draw up a Rule of Franciscan living. We would not, however, do any missionary work or preaching, and we would not aim at any kind of conversion. Our ashram would be open to people of any faith or of none.

Such a plan might not have been possible in England, for I do not think any bishop there would have been able to accept it. But it seemed to me that in India there was no reason whatever why groups of national-minded Christians should not associate themselves with members of other faiths in the most intimate manner for the service of poor people without in any way losing the distinctiveness of their own religion.

After long discussions, and much good advice from Gandhi himself, Shamrao finally sent me a cable saying that he would join me at the end of the year. This brought my plans within the realm of practical politics, and I resigned from the Christa Seva Sangh. We arranged that Shamrao should come back to India in Gandhi's party.

This was a tremendous plunge in the dark. We had no idea what our new country would be like. We knew nothing about the tribes. We had practically no money and were not at all sure how we were to get any. For our immediate needs our new friend Jamnalal Bajaj was ready to provide, and we can never forget how he helped us through those difficult days.

Yet the actual break with the Christa Seva Sangh, which I had recognized as inevitable a year or two earlier, was easy when it came at last. It did not involve any very serious change of outlook: it was an amicable retirement from an institution, not a drastic reversal of ideas. For Shamrao and I proposed to do much the same things as before, only with greater freedom and without the specifically missionary element which we had come to recognize in the Sangh's policy. We hoped at that time to continue in the Church, if only on the fringe of it. We were still interested in the mystical aspect of Christianity blending with the mysticism of the Hindus.

In its ultimate result, of course, my resignation had far-reaching and drastic results, but it took time. In 1931 the chief

practical result was that I no longer had a Society to pay my bills.

I stayed on in Poona for a few weeks, and then set out on my wanderings. I went first to stay at the Satyagraha Ashram at Sevagram near Wardha, Gandhi's favourite home, where he used to go whenever he wanted rest and retreat, and where later he established his headquarters. There was none of the romantic river-scenery of Sabarmati here. Sevagram was in the dusty plains of central India; it could get oppressively hot; and Gandhi used to take his morning and evening walks along the railway-line. It was as though he wanted a place where there would be nothing beautiful or sensuous to distract the soul, and his followers could devote themselves entirely to the needs of the poor, the challenge of the search for Truth.

I used to stay sometimes in Sevagram, more often with Jamnalal Bajaj who lived not far away. Jamnalal was a man of great property; a merchant prince who ten years previously had left his palatial home for a small overcrowded bungalow, where he lived a life of great simplicity. He still owned a good deal of property, but he regarded himself as a trustee, and the whole of his fortune was at the public service. He was a typical product of the Indian national movement: he had given his life to the winning of freedom through national reconstruction. Long ago he threw open the doors of his family temple to the 'untouchables'. He was a leader of the khadi movement which brought some help to the homes of the very poor. While I was with him, we went to open a number of wells to the 'untouchables' and some temples too were freed from the burden of caste restrictions. Only a very few Englishmen visited Wardha in those days and Jamnalal was never so well known to them as some other Congress leaders, largely because of his unwillingness to talk much in English. I think that was a pity, for there was a great deal in him—his simplicity, his straightforwardness and plainness of speech (I remember him rebuking me for saying 'thank you' so often, which he said I could not possibly mean), his Quaker-like attitude to existence would have made a strong appeal to them.

Jamnalal went, of course, to jail and one day I travelled to Dhulia to see him. I was so shocked at the way he, as a class

C prisoner, was being treated that I took a vow (everyone was doing this sort of thing then) that I would go barefoot until India won her independence. The only exception to this was that I should not make myself conspicuous and so I put on sandals when I visited a town. I kept this vow for about fifteen years and got so used to it and saved such a lot of money on socks, shoes and polish that I felt rather sorry when I no longer had an excuse to continue.

About this time I went with A. V. Thakkar (Thakkar Bapa), perhaps the most prominent of the social workers of his day, on a ten-day tour to see what was being done for the 'untouchables' and this made a great impression on me. We first went to Bombay, and put up at the Servants of India Society, where we were most kindly received by the labour leader, N. M. Joshi. In Bombay, we spent some crowded days visiting the tenements of the Bhangis (the sweepers who, in the absence of the flush-system, remove the refuse from the lavatories). These 'untouchables' were in the employment of the Municipality, and lived in municipal dwellings.

I quote an extract from a letter I wrote immediately afterwards.

The worst slums in London are nothing to these tenements laden with humanity, mostly tall buildings with hundreds of little rooms. In these some of the rooms are clean and airy, but overcrowded. A very few are single-storied dwellings, well built, clean and open. The majority, four-storied or single-storied, are dark, overcrowded, intolerably filthy. One settlement, typical of several others, was no more than a collection of tiny kennels, the house built of scraps of kerosene tins nailed together, without windows, on ground which—when the rain pours down—becomes a swamp exhaling poisonous vapours. Here live our own people, condemned by social custom to a life of degrading toil. The theatre of their joys and sorrows are these dark hutches. I went into one of them: the family was sitting and lying in the pitch darkness: the hut was heavy with the damp-laden heat of Bombay. Scarcely able to breathe, I backed out into the familiar sunlight. Here children come to birth, the first joys of love awaken, fevers and choleras must be endured, until death comes to free them—these brothers and sisters of our own whom society has made into parasites on human excrement.

We went to the central sewage station. It was fairly clean—but the smells! Smells, astonishing, shocking, bewildering smells! a whole new world of possibilities in horror! smells mixed and blended to produce new smells; every second they came; in their infinite variety, they swarmed about you, now stimulating, now depressing you, unforgettable, amazing. And past many of the sweeper-settlements, where live little children whose affinities are with blue skies and 'all enchanting innocencies', the open sewer carries its slow-moving, hideous cargo.

From Bombay Thakkar Bapa and I went on to a place called Jalhod, where we stayed with a landowner, and a deputation of sweepers waited on Thakkar Bapa, but they were not admitted to the house or even to the courtyard, and we had to talk to them sitting in the street under a steady downpour of rain.

We went then to Dohad, the centre of Thakkar Bapa's work among the Bhils. Here I had the (to me) novel experience of opening and naming a street—Thakkar Street.

On Jamnalalji's advice I went up to Betul, a charming country town on the Satpura plateau, to see whether I could find a suitable place for our headquarters in that tribal area. I had an introduction to a leading merchant and landlord, Seth Dipchand Gothi, who entertained me royally in the bosom of his family, and took me about the countryside to see as many places as possible. Although a man of considerable wealth, he had no motor car.

'If I get one,' he said, 'it will always be commandeered by officials, and I should feel so annoyed that I prefer to go on foot.'

So we went down by train to the Tapti river, and tramped on foot through the jungle, visiting a number of Gond villages. Afterwards we made a long journey by bullock-cart in the Korku country. I liked Betul very much and was fascinated by the Gonds and Korkus, even though I had a foretaste of what village life would mean in the way I was pursued by the police wherever I went. At that time I used to wear a dhoti tied Madrasi-fashion and a long shirt which hung down outside. Both, of course, were of khadi. For a few days I even put on a Gandhi cap. But this gave me so criminal an appearance in the eyes even of my dearest friends that I abandoned it. It was

not remarkable, therefore, that an Englishman so unorthodoxly dressed should have attracted the notice of the police, especially as Betul had been the scene of some violent struggles between Government and the tribesmen.

From Betul I went to Chhindwara, where I was fortunate to have a car put at my disposal, and I was taken up to the beautiful village of Tamia on the Pachmarhi road. Unhappily, I was not the first person to think Tamia a suitable place to live in. There were missionaries in the neighbourhood, a Government dispensary and even a dak bungalow. Beautiful as it was, therefore, I had to abandon the idea of settling in Chhindwara.

When I got back to Wardha I found myself at a loose end, for it was not possible for me to go and settle in a village until Shamrao returned, even if I could have got land and made arrangements in time, and he was not due back from England until Christmas. I went, therefore, to stay with Acharya Kripalani, later a celebrated and controversial politician, at Meerut.

After a few days studying the khadi industry there, I went with Kripalani on a tour in the United Provinces. I could not have had a better companion and we visited all the bigger places and many of the smaller and more interesting ones—Muttra, Brindaban, Hardwar, Hrishikesh, Ayodhya. We were chiefly concerned on this occasion in promoting the cause of khadi, and we used to give a number of reasons why people should wear it—because it was the symbol of freedom, equalized people by dressing rich and poor alike in the same cloth, put money in the hands of the peasants instead of the capitalists and was a constant reminder of Gandhi's philosophy. We then usually gave a brief outline of that philosophy, stressing particularly the note of universal love, non-violence and the new peaceful method of political agitation which Gandhi had introduced.

During my tour in the United Provinces, I came for the first time into real contact with Indian poverty, for the villages of the C P and the U P were much poorer than those of Gujarat or Maharashtra. As Kripalani said to me, 'No one with any imagination should visit these places. It is almost more than I can bear.' He was right. I wrote:

It is utterly heart-breaking to see these wretched tumbledown villages, with their pools of filth, their cheerlessness, the thin scarcely-clad bodies of their inhabitants, with hunger and despair in their eyes. Near Meerut, a villager was crippled in an accident. All day he had to lie on his rough bed. No one could be spared to nurse him. As the time for paying the rent drew near, the family began to wonder how he was to be fed. They carried him tenderly to the doctor. I saw the poor man with his body covered with ghastly bed-sores. And his friends who loved him said to the doctor, 'We cannot feed him. There is no one to care for him. Can't you give him something to take him to another world?'

The tour was surprisingly uneventful. But we were investigated by the police on various occasions, and once, in Cawnpore, an order was passed forbidding us to hold any public meeting.

Our last visit on the way down to Bombay to meet Gandhi on his return from the Round Table Conference—Shamrao too was travelling with him—was to Jubbulpore. Here I gave precisely the same lecture which I had delivered in every large town in the United Provinces, urging the people to remain non-violent, to love their enemies and, while fighting bravely for freedom, to keep the spirit of peace in their hearts. The local CID, whose agent was not apparently very familiar with the English language, sent in a report that I had advocated violent revolution, and had praised the terrorist Bhagat Singh, who had recently been executed. I had made some reference to the *Bhagavad-Gita*, and no doubt the reporter had confused the two names.

What followed was typical of what was continually happening all over India. The report went up to the Commissioner. On reading it he at once recommended my deportation from India.

From Jubbulpore, Kripalani and I travelled down to Bombay. For Kripalani, of course, the great event was the arrival of Mahatma Gandhi. For me Shamrao's return to India seemed even more important. I managed to get a special pass to go on board the boat. It was a very impressive sight that morning, for the whole of the great city seemed to have turned out to welcome Gandhi, and the immediate approaches to the docks were lined with saffron-robed Desh Sevikas.

I found Shamrao looking very well but I contented myself with greeting him and my old friend Bernard Aluwihare; I had never felt it was proper for people of no importance in the political world, just because they were Europeans, to push themselves forward into the presence of Gandhi. However, we were invited to go to his house, where we shared a room with the Privats, an enthusiastic Swiss couple who had travelled to India with the party.

The following day Shamrao and I went up to Matheran in order to make our plans for the future in some degree of quiet. But after only three days a telegram arrived from Mahadev Desai asking us to come at once. We left in less than ten minutes, got a couple of horses, and rode down the hill to a station from which we could get a quick train to Bombay.

VI

Gandhi was staying in a house called Mani Bhuvan and he invited us to stay with him there. There was great excitement in the city; the Viceroy had finally rejected the Congress offer of peace; Nehru was already in jail, and the arrest of other national leaders was expected at any moment.

But when we reached Mani Bhuvan and climbed to the roof, we found a great serenity in astonishing contrast to the crowds and turmoil outside. The roof was a very pleasant place. Low tents had been erected, and there were palms and plants: at least 300 people could gather there. It was cool and you could see the stars. Bapu was sitting at the wheel quietly spinning. He had already begun his weekly silence. I carried on a one-sided conversation with him, and he wrote down his questions and replies on a scrap of paper which I still have. I must have begun by asking if there was anything I could do.

He wrote:

I have sent for you for that very purpose. I have told Mahadev all I have been revolving in my mind. When he comes he will tell you or I shall briefly write what is wanted.

How are you keeping in health?

He [Mahadev] should be coming shortly. If he does not

during the time I finish this I shall write out what I want to say.

You are sleeping here? If so is your bedding etc. arranged?

Then Shamrao and I retired to the smaller tent and Bapu lay down about three yards from us, while some thirty others lay on the roof under the canvas shelter. Mrs Gandhi and Mirabehn gave us a surprisingly satisfying supper of dates, nuts and fruit. But I could not sleep. As I wrote at the time, 'I felt I had to keep vigil, and for hours I was under those splendid stars that rose, tier upon tier above me, while beside me Bapu slept like a child committed to his Father's hands. I thought of Christ going up to Jerusalem, his eyes filled with determination and courage: and I seemed to see the Spirit of Christ travelling the centuries like a bright sword turned against all wrong and injustice. Among these sleeping friends so dear to us, brave, pure-hearted, sincere, the spirit of Love was manifest and unconquerable'.

At last I lay down between Shamrao and Bernard on my hastily improvised bed on the floor, just beside Bapu, and fell into a deep sleep, when suddenly like the coming of a dream there was a stir and a whisper: 'The police have come.'

We started up and I saw what I shall never forget—a fully uniformed Commissioner of Police at the foot of Bapu's bed, and Bapu just waking, a little bewildered, looking old, fragile and rather pathetic with the mists of sleep still on his face.

'Mr Gandhi, it is my duty to arrest you.'

A beautiful smile of welcome broke out on Bapu's face and now he looked young, strong and confident. He made signs to show that he was keeping silence.

The Commissioner smiled and with great courtesy said, 'I should like you to be ready in half an hour's time.'

It was five minutes past three. Bapu looked at his watch and the Commissioner said, 'Ah, the famous watch!' And they both laughed heartily. Bapu took a pencil and wrote, 'I will be ready to come with you in half an hour.'

The Commissioner laid his hand on Bapu's shoulder with a gesture so full of affection that I thought it was an embrace, until I realized that it was the formal token of arrest. Bapu then cleaned his teeth and retired for a moment. The door was

guarded, and all of us who were on the roof sat round in a circle. I looked out on to the road where some had been keeping all-night vigil and where a little crowd, very quiet and orderly, had collected, but there were no special police precautions.

When he was ready, Bapu sat in the midst of us for the prayers and we sang together the Song of the True Vaishnava. Then Bapu took pencil and paper and wrote a few messages, some last instructions to his followers and a letter to Sardar Vallabhbhai, which was as follows:

'Infinite is God's mercy' (these were the first words to be written after his arrest). 'Please tell the people never to swerve from truth and non-violence. Never to flinch, but to give their lives and all to win Swaraj.' He then wrote a short note and gave it to me:

My dear Elwyn,

I am so glad you have come. I would like you yourself to tell your countrymen that I love them even as I love my own countrymen. I have never done anything towards them in hatred or malice and God willing I shall never do anything in that manner in future. I am acting no differently towards them now from what I have done under similar circumstances towards my own kith and kin.

with love

yours

M. K. Gandhi

Then Bapu stood up to take farewell. It was a strange sight: the police at the door, Mirabehn and Devadas bustling to and fro with the baggage which was already packed, Bapu surrounded by his friends, many of them weeping. Mrs Gandhi with tears running down her cheeks said, 'Can't you take me with you?' Everyone in turn touched his feet, and when I said goodbye he pulled my ear with a smile. He was in very good spirits: he might have been going to a festival rather than a jail.

Then, followed by the whole company, he went downstairs. Shamrao and I watched from the roof. The tiny figure got into the car and the crowd surged round it. It was a wonderful tribute to India's non-violence that there were only a few policemen and they were able to be in the midst of the crowd without fear of danger. Just at that moment a message came to say that

Sardar Vallabhbhai, the Congress President, had also been arrested. And then the crowd scattered as the car bearing the very soul of India drove away through the dark and deserted streets.

VII

Among the instructions scribbled for Mahadev Desai after the arrest was one asking me to go to the North-West Frontier Province to discover what was really happening there. Disquieting reports had filtered down to Bombay about the severe repression of the 'Red-Shirt' movement; no journalists were admitted, all press reports were strictly censored, and as a result there was a great deal of concern about the fate of the Pathans who had so unexpectedly adopted Gandhi's non-violent technique. I was the first 'reporter' to get in, and this, I later heard with some complacency, rather annoyed the India Office.

This all happened long ago and I must put the reader briefly in the picture. Nationalist activities in the N.W.F. Province were largely associated with the name of Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan. This splendid and heroic figure captured the imagination of the Pathans. His name was constantly linked with that of Gandhi, though his speeches were more fiery, and he had not the latter's power of winning the hearts of his enemies. He was a competent organizer, an autocrat, essentially a leader, yet very gentle, with a sincere love for his villagers. The very spirit of non-violence shone in his face. When I saw him some years later, I thought of Wordsworth's lines on another great Highlander:

In him the savage virtue of the Race,
Revenge, and all ferocious thoughts were dead;
Nor did he change; but kept in lofty place
The wisdom which adversity had bred.

At the beginning of 1930, Abdul Ghaffar Khan started an organization which aimed at developing into an army of non-violent warriors. They were called 'Khudai Khidmatgars'

(Servants of God). At first they had no uniform, but one day a volunteer turned up on parade with a shirt which had been dipped in brick-dust mixed in water. It looked well and was convenient, so it was adopted as a uniform—an unfortunate accident which gave rise to the alarming name of 'Red-Shirts'. But there was nothing 'Red' about the Red-Shirts; they had nothing whatever to do with Moscow and nothing to do with violence. In happier times, they might have developed into a Frontier Scout Movement. The movement was highly organized: it had its Generals, Colonels, Captains, and its rank and file: it even had its own C.I.D. The whole country was divided into 'Districts': there was a 'civil' as well as a 'military' administration; each District had its Jirga or Local Board with President and committee, as well as its 'garrison' in charge of a Colonel or Major.

Abdul Ghaffar Khan made a point of taking no important step without consulting Gandhi, and his supreme achievement during this period was to drive home the message of non-violence, which was a very great thing. The Pathan was naturally violent and revengeful: he possessed arms; and for hundreds of years he had lived by the law of retaliation. There was no greater insult than to be beaten, and in front of women. To bear such insult without retaliation, to fight with the strange, clean weapon of Satyagraha, was the new ideal set before the Frontier by Abdul Ghaffar Khan. He used to say, 'You are to be an army of sufferers, not of avengers. Only by patience will you be victorious.' And the Afridis who carried their merchandise to the bazaars of Peshawar and saw the picketers there suffering without retaliation, returned to their mountain fortresses with rage and wonder in their hearts.

Government soon began to be seriously worried. The numbers of the Red-Shirts swelled to over a hundred thousand; their organization was excellent: they were in a position to paralyse the administration; a parallel Government had practically been established: the prestige and influence of Abdul Ghaffar Khan was paramount. Towards the end of the year, therefore, an ordinance was promulgated and the entire General Staff of the Red-Shirts was arrested. Abdul Ghaffar Khan himself went to jail on Christmas Day. Within a week, every Red-

Shirt officer, from Colonel to Subedar, and every President and Secretary of the district Jirgas was in jail.

Mahadev Desai wanted us (for I insisted on taking Shamrao with me) to start for Peshawar at once but I had no money for the fare, nor had anyone else. Devadas Gandhi, therefore, took us round to visit two or three wealthy merchants in Bombay and very quickly collected the small sum—I think it was only 300 rupees—which we felt (as usual thinking that money didn't matter) would be required.

I have always looked back on this incident with great satisfaction, for it was the one time in my life when I have been a man of action and gone into a certain amount of danger. Always a devotee of thriller fiction, I now found myself plunged into the most exciting cloak-and-dagger adventures. It was obvious that if I went as I was, in the Gandhi uniform, I would be arrested immediately, so I borrowed a suit made in London which belonged to Bernard Aluwihare and which, though far too small for me, at least made me look respectable. We travelled Inter Class, which personally I thought would attract attention but, as it turned out, enabled us to get through the police cordon that was drawn round the Province. Government got information that I was on the way and expected me to be travelling First Class and, in consequence, arrested a perfectly innocent English businessman to his great indignation. Under the cover of the flap caused by this gentleman we managed to get through.

We had to spend some hours in Delhi and there was an exciting interview at night with some contacts under the walls of the Red Fort. I forget exactly what it was about except that it had something to do with gold. Later, on the Lahore platform, I met dear Bul (Korshed Naoroji) who told us something of what we might expect.

When we reached Peshawar we found ourselves in a strange confusing world. Everything had been arranged in a great hurry and I had no idea where to go or how to begin. Devadas, however, had given us the name of a merchant in the city and we drove by tonga to his house, only to be kept waiting for an hour while he deliberated whether or not it was safe to see us. Shamrao has described our arrival and its immediate sequel.

The merchant was dressed very smartly and looked quite brave. We thought we should get a lot of help from him. But as soon as he read our letter of introduction he trembled all over his body. 'The man you want is very old and blind, and is unable to see anyone,' he said. However, we did not give up hope, but sat there talking to him. Verrier is very good at getting information out of people, and we were able to learn a good deal of the situation even from this panic-stricken friend, who was in himself a vivid illustration of the reign of terror on the Frontier. He thought that I looked suspicious in my Maharashtrian clothes, and lent me some of his baggy Pathan trousers and Russian shoes. After about an hour, the merchant whom his brother had described as old and blind came in. He was about thirty-five and was perfect in feature. He helped us a good deal, though very cautious that no official should discover that he had anything to do with us.

Our first plan was to stay with him as if we were merchants come to deal with his firm, but we soon found that this would not do, since no Englishman ever stayed in an Indian home in the City. So we drove off, through several police guards, to the biggest hotel in the Cantonment where many Englishmen and officers were living.

The hotel, however, although extremely comfortable, was too expensive for our small budget and the next day we moved into the Dak Bungalow, where I actually filled in a form under my own name for the police who, I believe, got a rocket for not having spotted me. The awkward thing was that I had to pretend to treat poor Shamrao as if he was a servant. There was only one room available and Shamrao had to sleep outside on the veranda where it was very cold. But Englishmen and Indians were not supposed to be familiar in those days on the Frontier and had we shared a room it would have created immediate suspicion. When we got our bill there were two items—'Food for the Sahib' and then, 'Food for the Fellow' at half-price. Happily we knew each other far too well for any of this to matter.

In spite of all difficulties, however, we managed to get a certain amount of information in Peshawar, though it was very difficult to persuade people to say anything and most of them would only come to see me at night, creeping

furtively to the back door of a house or meeting me in some obscure room.

On the third day we visited a number of villages round Peshawar and on the fourth day had a wonderful drive through the wild and rugged hills to Kohat in a car we managed to hire. We were frequently stopped on the way and at one place the police came and asked me if I had a pistol. When I said 'No', they were astonished and even offered me one, but I nonchalantly lit a cigarette (I never smoked ordinarily in those days and put it out directly we got through). This seems to have convinced them that I was a sahib.

Shamrao did most of the work in Kohat, for it would have been impossible for me to go round the town getting information.

On the fifth day we went up the Khyber Pass, walking down from Landi Kotal to Zintara. There was occasional rifle fire round us—'Just a family feud,' said our guide casually. We visited some of the tribal villages and discussed the situation with the Afridis. I remember telling Shamrao, as we approached Peshawar again, that as we now had finished our work, all we had to do was to become heroes by being arrested. Before going up the Pass I had sent a letter to the Deputy Commissioner telling him why we had come and asking him if I could have an interview so that I could hear the official view of things and so make my report more balanced. When we got out of the station at Peshawar I received the answer to my letter in two English police officers and some constables with the following order of deportation:

ORDER

In exercise of the powers delegated to me under Section 4(1) (c) Emergency Powers Ordinance, it is hereby directed that the Reverend Verrier Elwin shall forthwith remove himself from and shall not return to the North-West Frontier Province.

The penalty to which he becomes liable for breach of this Order should be explained to Mr Elwin.

O. K. Caroe,
District Magistrate,
Peshawar

15.1.32

The policeman who actually arrested me was an amusing person and kept on saying he was 'damned sorry'. They took us back to the Dak Bungalow and searched our baggage but were unable to find anything. We were allowed to stay on in our rooms under open arrest, but Caroe ordered that I should leave Peshawar by the most inconvenient train in the day. My friend, the Inspector of Police, sent over a note to this gentleman saying that I was ready to give my parole if I could leave the following morning by the Frontier Mail but Caroe insisted that I should have an uncomfortable night in the train and go at once. 'That', said my friend, 'is what is called imperialism.'

After a drink or two with my policeman we went down to the station where a dozen seedy-looking CID men paraded before me looking at me with sinister attention. This was so that they would recognize me if I ever tried to be naughty again. Mr Pickwick had the same experience 'sitting for his portrait' at the Fleet.

The one thing the police were after was documentary evidence but I managed to hide all my notes, as well as certain papers which would have got some of the Peshawar people into trouble had they been found, in a packet of 'Force'. This stood, like Poe's Purloined Letter, in full view on a table in our room, and though the police searchers went through everything else like a dose of salts, they ignored the innocent-looking packet of breakfast cereal. I carried it down in triumph to Bombay and was able to write and publish a report in consequence. This was immediately declared forfeit to His Majesty and, though it was reissued in London later, for many years even I myself was unable to get a copy. But it was nice to think of King George having it.

VIII

Back in Bombay we had to face another problem. Shamrao had returned from England and sacrificed his higher education to work for the tribal people. My own inclination was in the same direction. But now, and specially since Gandhi's arrest

and my own deportation, a good deal of pressure was put on me to enter politics. For example, at this time the Congress was planning to appoint a series of Presidents which would include members of every community, and Jammalal Bajaj asked me if I would be willing to become Congress President when it was the turn of an Englishman to occupy that high office. It would not, he pointed out, mean a great deal of work, for I would certainly be arrested and imprisoned within a week. I told him that I was willing and I have sometimes wondered what would have happened if I had gone through with it.

But when Shamrao and I talked it over, we came to the conclusion that this was not really our line. I have always been a little doubtful of the value of the intervention of European political amateurs in matters at which they are not expert. And, though I have always regretted that I did not go to jail, it was obvious that Government would not have given me that privilege, but would have deported me from the country, and that would merely have been a humiliation. And so we decided to keep to our original plan of going into the Gond country in the Central Provinces.

As I had been unable to get land in Betul and most of my friends were now in jail, I asked the Bishop of Nagpur (for it must be remembered I was still a loyal, if somewhat unorthodox, member of the Church of England) for his advice. This was Bishop Wood, a brave, strong man, with a sincere affection for the tribes and an equal devotion to the British Empire. His biographer says of him: 'He was always on the most friendly terms with Forest officials.' 'How fully he won the confidence of Government is evident from the fact that in his third year in India he was awarded the Kaiser-i-Hind Medal.' In his dealings with us he fully justified that confidence.

The bishop recommended Karanjia, a Gond village in the Mandla District, as particularly suitable for me. Of the last five Europeans to stay in this part of the world, he pointed out with relish, four had died within a year. This sounded very much what we wanted and so, on the 28th of January, 1932, a day which marks the central turning-point in my life, Shamrao and I started out in a bullock-cart, with only a couple of hundred rupees between us, through the jungle into the Maikal

Hills. Two days later we reached Karanjia, ahead of our baggage and supplies, tired and hungry. No one would come near us: we could not get so much as a pot of water. Shamrao went to try and make arrangements and I sat waiting by the roadside. I can still remember the appalling sense of desolation that swept over me then, the sudden fear that I had staked everything on the wrong horse. My mind went back to Oxford: there were friends there, friends of my own kind. Would there be any here? There was comfort in Oxford: there was certainly no comfort here. In Bombay, Poona, Sabarmati, Wardha there were allies, people you could work with. In this unfamiliar Central Provinces, in Mandla District and its cold welcome, this strange remote frightened village, I felt very much alone. Above all, I felt that I should be wasted, useless: it would have been better to have faced deportation or, if I had been lucky, imprisonment. And why, O why, did I leave the lovely books and libraries of Oxford and London?

We spent that night in a small, cold, dirty Forest Bungalow and the next morning went to visit the village. Karanjia consists of ten hamlets and the nearest had the attractive name of Tikera Tola (a *tikera* is a small hill standing by itself: ever since, even in Shillong, I have lived on *tikeras*). Here we found an impoverished but friendly Mussalman who had married a Gond girl and adopted the tribal way of life. He agreed to rent us, for three rupees a month, a small shed in which he kept his goats, and gave us the use of a veranda near by for a kitchen. The bargain struck, he turned out the goats, had the hut washed with cowdung, warm piles of straw were heaped on the floor, a small hearth was built on the veranda, someone brought wood and water, and that evening we were in our new home.

As I lay down to sleep on that mud floor the doubts and fears of the previous day vanished, never to return. In that little goat-shed I realized that I was caught, that never would I be able to escape the call of the primitive world; for better or worse I was committed. Yet at that moment, there was little that was beautiful, or exciting, or romantic: the Gonds of Tikera Tola seemed a little dull (no dances to welcome us), very poor, dirty, timid and shockingly diseased. But I had had

the first glimpse of the 'elusive treasure' and I knew I must search till I found it, even if it took all my life.

At first, however, it looked as if we should not be able to search for very long. I wrote, as a matter of courtesy, to the Deputy Commissioner at Mandla, and soon afterwards received this remarkable letter in reply:

In reply to your letter of the 29th January, the Commissioner has asked me to inform you that in view of your political record, we do not want you in this district.

Yours sincerely
D. V. Rege

We took no notice of this letter and expected to be arrested at any moment; in fact, we posted a boy on the top of a neighbouring hill to keep a look-out for the police so that we would have time to destroy any incriminating papers before they arrived. Nothing much, however, happened except that one day we were raided and searched by the police and a little later Rege himself came and, sitting on the floor of our hut, had a very pleasant chat. In actual fact, Rege was a good person and privately very sympathetic with the Congress movement: he explained that he had had to write as he did under the orders of the Commissioner. We were raided on one or two other occasions and the police went off with some of my books, fortunately not ones that I was very fond of.

From the point of view of our work this was, of course, exactly what was wanted. It meant that we got off on the right foot with the local villagers. We must be decent people, they thought, very like themselves; the police bothered them and they bothered us. We were clearly on the same side.

During those first months in Karanjia I wrote a small book which I called *Truth about India*, though the publishers changed this, rather cynically I thought, to *Truth about India—Can we get it?* I had my typewriter with me but no furniture and I typed the entire book sitting on the mud floor of our little hut.

I will go back a little here and mention other things of the kind which I had done earlier. The most important of them was a joint book by Winslow and myself called *The Dawn of Indian Freedom* which had a foreword by Archbishop Temple;

it seems to have done some good, especially in religious circles, in Britain. My contribution consisted of two long chapters, one a study of Gandhi, the other a 70-page sketch of the history and principles of Satyagraha. My chapters were violently attacked in the *Times of India*, which also told the archbishop that 'he would have done better not to meddle in a matter of which he knew so very little'. But elsewhere the book was sympathetically received, even by those who disagreed with it.

While I was in Sabarmati I had come to know the gifted artist Kanu Desai and he asked me to write a prefatory essay to an album of his paintings and sketches of Gandhi. I took a lot of trouble over this and it was published in London by the Golden Vista Press, and was later reprinted in India by a publisher who misspelt my name throughout.

My booklet *Christ and Satyagraha* was a sort of guide-book for the Christian revolutionary; it united the Fathers of the Church and the religious teachers of modern times to prove the right and duty of Christians to overthrow a foreign or despotic Government. I gave a number of circumstances when a Government should, on principles generally accepted by the Church, be resisted. The first was when its authority was not just but usurped. 'It is the universal belief in India that the foreign and unnatural Government now in existence, began in usurpation, continued in usurpation and must end as soon as possible.' Then a Government may be resisted when it commands that which is unjust, when it is not the expression of the general will, when it impoverishes the common life, when its laws violate some higher law of ethics or religion.

Above all things [I wrote] the Christian's task is one of reconciliation. 'Blessed are the peace-makers, for they shall be called sons of God.' To be a peace-maker does not mean that a man must be politically neutral, but that, while believing whole-heartedly in the justice of his own cause, he tries to see and to make known all that is good on the other side, and never shuts any possible doorway into peace. 'I have dedicated my whole life,' says Romain Rolland, 'to the reconciliation of mankind.' This ideal is one that is not out of reach even of the combatant in the present bloodless war. For us in India today, reconciliation does not mean giving in before the goal is won;

it does not mean a cry of Peace, Peace, when there is no peace. What it does mean is that we should carry on our war always with a view to peace; that we should so act that no bitter memories, no poignant regrets, shall arise to haunt our future; that we should always behave to our enemies as if they were one day to be our friends.

In one sense, every war is a civil war; all strife between men is a domestic strife: there is only one nation, one race, one family; we all belong to the nation, the race, the family of God.

I also published a small booklet, *Religious and Cultural Aspects of Khadi*, with a foreword by Acharya Kripalani, and many articles on religious subjects—the Nivritti-Marga, the religion of Bhakti, the mysticism associated with the idea of Light—in the *Ashram Review*. I also did a study of *Mahatma Gandhi's Philosophy of Truth*, which appeared in the *Modern Review*. I first surveyed historically those Western mystics who had thought of religion primarily in terms of Truth, from Plato and Plotinus to the present day, and then made a detailed study of Gandhi's own philosophy, which I summarized as follows:

The identification of the Ultimate Reality with Truth is very old, and Mahatma Gandhi is original not so much in speaking of Truth as in speaking of practically nothing else. His conception of Truth is metaphysical, mystical and moral; there is no aspect of it which is not real to him. It has been his special task to bring this lofty philosophical idea down to earth, to introduce it as a working principle into the lives of ordinary people, to direct its austere moral challenge upon world-politics, to exalt it as a practical basis of business and personal relations and to work out with great exactness what is implied in the quest for its realization.

What a fuss people made about me in those days! Years afterwards a high official of the Government of India told me that the Central Provinces Government had been very worried about me and what I might be up to. I was also rather worried about them for, although I realized that it was all part of the game and I have always enjoyed the company of senior police officials, it is rather distracting to have your letters read, your house searched and to be followed about everywhere by police-

men of the lower grades who are often lacking in manners and in our case did their best to obstruct our work.

IX

In 1932, I decided, rather unwisely as it turned out, that I should go to England during the rains, partly to try to arouse people there to the seriousness of the Indian situation, and partly to see my mother who had been very ill. Shamrao and I went down to Bombay, and there I nearly abandoned the trip. My passport had expired and the Bombay Government refused to renew it except for a period of three weeks, which would just allow me to reach England, but not to return. So I gave up the idea of going, and announced the fact in the press.

There was an immediate outcry; the *Bombay Chronicle* devoted its morning leader to the subject, and was good enough to point out that it was men like me 'who enable Indians to believe that the British nation does not consist entirely of Imperialists, commercial exploiters, swashbuckling special correspondents. They are the one link that holds the attenuated chain of Indo-British relations together'.

Soon afterwards, I received a friendly letter from the Chief Passport Officer, asking me to go and see him, which I did. This official explained that even if he renewed my passport for five years, Government could always cancel it at any moment, but that actually his own refusal to extend it for a longer period was due to purely technical reasons, and he saw no reason why I should have any difficulty in getting it renewed for the full period after I had reached England.

I was much simpler then than I am now. I should, of course, have seen very clearly, especially in view of the Commissioner's attempt to get me deported, that Government was only anxious to get me out of India without a press agitation. But I was really keen to visit England, and after arranging that Shamrao should go for medical training at the Tirupattur Ashram, I said goodbye to him and left Bombay.

I had an interesting journey across Europe, making contact with the pro-Indian groups in Italy, Switzerland and France.

In Siena and Florence I went about with a grand old English lady, Miss Turton, splendid and energetic for all her seventy-five years, one of India's unofficial publicists. At Siena, I stayed in the lovely palace of Ravizza, where the family was equally enthusiastic for the Indian cause. In Florence I spent a day in a finely decorated house, the Villa Star, whose private chapel was being painted by the artists Giovanni and Mai Costetti. Giovanni was writing a little book in Italian about Gandhi and asked me to contribute a foreword, though in the end nothing came of it.

I went on to visit Villeneuve and M. and Mme Privat: I stayed with Romain Rolland and his sister on the way back. In Paris I visited the little flat of Mme Guiesse in the Latin quarter. She had founded a society called the Friends of India and published a paper, *Nouvelles de l'Inde*.

When I reached London I had a regular reception at Victoria Station, and a full programme was arranged for me. My first meeting was at Kingsley Hall in Bow, where Gandhi had stayed in London, with George Lansbury (then Leader of the Opposition in the House of Commons) in the chair. 'The only solution of the present situation', I declared, 'is to give India what she wants, that is self-government. But if Britain will not do this, she at least ought to fight with clean hands.' I concluded: 'I long to see my countrymen achieve a sufficient degree of greatness to rise to the chivalrous appeal of Mahatma Gandhi. If we do so we shall show that brute force is not the only power, and that the principles of Jesus Christ are still being applied in the conduct of great peoples towards one another.'

At a later meeting, presided over by C. F. Andrews, I described the condition of India, the oppression by the police, the sufferings of the imprisoned. I again pleaded for justice. 'Surely to do justice to a country that wants to be free is no betrayal, but the highest loyalty to our own traditions . . . While the statesmen of Europe are endeavouring to abandon brute force, Britain is employing that force in India.' I described Gandhi's arrest earlier in the year and said that as I saw the Mahatma and the Police Commissioner face each other I 'had no doubt that Mahatma Gandhi's empty hands were the stronger hands and that if they took away from England her

Empire they might restore to her a feeling of chivalry in dealing with a subject race'.

I addressed many other meetings and had a number of interviews with members of Government, among them Lord Irwin, as he then was. I got to know the Lord Chancellor, Lord Sankey, quite well, and among my trophies is a copy of *The Spirit of Man*, in which he marked his favourite passages. But Sir Samuel Hoare (later Lord Templewood), who was then Secretary of State for India, refused to see me on the ground that I had behaved 'in an indiscreet way' and that 'it would not be appropriate that he should receive me' at the India Office. In fact, when I went to see Lord Irwin he began by saying, 'In loyalty to my colleagues, I must tell you that the Secretary of State for India has the lowest possible opinion of you. But having said this, let us talk as friends.'

Sir Samuel showed his displeasure in a very practical way. I applied for a renewal of my passport immediately, getting George Lansbury to sign my application, but a week later I received the following letter:

The Chief Passport Officer presents his compliments to the Reverend H. V. H. Elwin and, with reference to his application for the renewal of his passport, begs to inform him in accordance with a request made by the Secretary of State for India that he cannot be granted passport facilities for entry into India.

If Mr Elwin desires his passport to be renewed this will be done but the passport will have to be endorsed as not valid for India.

'This document', I wrote shortly afterwards, 'was one of the most shattering I have ever received, and yet I am glad I had it, for it revealed to me, as nothing else could have done, something of the helplessness of being a political outcaste, a condition into which so many thousands of people have been thrown both by British imperialism and by the dictatorships of the last decade. It was impossible to get an interview with anyone. Nobody would answer your letters. I was not important enough for the British press to take up my cause. I felt as though I was standing in front of a great precipice up which there was no hope of climbing. I approached everyone I could, and they told me of the great difficulty they too found in persuading the authorities

even to discuss anything to do with me.' My sufferings were very small compared to those of others, but they did at least give me some idea of what it must be like to lose one's passport.

But I had a few friends, and some of them, working behind the scenes, were able ultimately to put enough pressure on the India Office officials to get them to consent to allow me to return to India, provided that I signed an undertaking:

That I would confine myself entirely to work among the Gonds;
take no part in civil disobedience or any other political movement;
refrain, as far as possible, from associating with any persons engaged in political agitation;
refrain from writing articles against the Government;
and would observe the undertaking in the spirit as well as the letter.

Here was another crisis. C. F. Andrews thought I should not sign; others thought I should. Krishna Menon, later Defence Minister of India, was very helpful. I myself had no doubt of my duty. I had started my tribal work and I must go on with it. I signed, and caught the first available boat for India. When they heard about it later, both Gandhi and Jinnah approved of my decision and, looking back, I have no doubt it was right.

But it meant, of course, the end of my active political interests; it meant some misunderstanding, much isolation—for I was cut off from everyone. But it actually worked out very well. Sir Francis Younghusband remarked, 'I will always be grateful to Sam Hoare for one thing at least, that he forced Elwin from politics to poetry.'

I was not, however, isolated entirely from Bapu and continued to correspond with him, even when he was in jail. I have a packet of precious letters in his own hand—the quaint little home-made envelopes, the letters on tiny scraps of paper.

One of Gandhi's greatest concerns was the abolition of untouchability and in 1933 he was greatly disturbed by the arrangements made by Ramsay MacDonald's Government which provided separate electorates for the untouchables.

Though well-intentioned, Gandhi felt that this would still further divide the caste Hindus from their brethren and he wrote to the British Prime Minister declaring that if this plan went through he would fast unto death in protest against it. This dramatic gesture was scheduled for the 20th of September and on the 16th Bapu wrote to me from the Yeravda Central Prison.

My dear Verrier,

You had, I hope, no difficulty in understanding the step I am about to take. This is therefore just to tell you that all my English friends were before my mind's eye when I penned my letters to the Prime Minister. May God bring good out of this.

My love to you all in which Sardar and Mahadev join.

We sing the hymn this evening (Friday).

Bapu

Happily the untouchable leaders and the Indian moderates modified the original scheme sufficiently to enable Gandhi to break his fast after six days. He does not seem, however, to have been altogether happy about it and he decided in May of the following year to undertake a 'self-purificatory fast' for twenty-one days, in spite of Nehru's determined opposition. This fast began on the 8th of May and the previous day Gandhi wrote to me again from prison.

My dear Verrier,

I cannot enter upon the ordeal without talking to you. It is a matter of great joy to me that I have the prayers of many many true friends to speed me on—Truth is God and he will give me all the food I shall need during the fast. I wish I had time to talk more to you.

I hope you are all well.

Love to you all,

Bapu

The following day Government released him and he went to continue the fast in the house of a friend in Poona. A week after his ordeal had concluded he wrote to me from there, speaking of the 'very wonderful twenty-one days' which he had passed.

My dear Verrier,

Of course I have been having news about you and now I have your letter before me of the 31st ultimo.

Yes, God has been good to me. He has been a friend in need. He never forsook me during all those very wonderful 21 days. But I must not dictate a long letter, after having dictated one long letter to Mira who stood in need of one. I do not want you to come here merely for the purpose of meeting me. The temptation to say 'come' is there but I know that I must resist it. You have your work cut out for you and you must not be disturbed.

I am glad you all seem to be keeping well. Do send my love to mother, Eldyth and the Italian sisters when you write to them. I am flourishing.

Love
Bapu

Shortly after Gandhi's arrest in 1932, I wrote to a number of friends in India and Europe, as well as to Gandhi himself, to suggest that we should all sing the hymn 'Lead, kindly Light' on Friday evenings as an act of unity and friendship between those in jail and the rest of us. This is the hymn to which Gandhi refers in the first of his letters. The idea caught on and was continued for several years.

I have many other letters from Bapu, nearly all in his own hand. In July 1939, he wrote to me about spinning, whose utility for the Gonds I had questioned. He replied that he did not want us to spin unless we had a living faith in it. The cause of spinning, he said, 'is passing thro' a severe trial. To me it is on the same level with the war against untouchability. Even if Indian humanity did not rise to them, I should be spinning and warring against untouchability. Without them non-violence cannot be established nor truth vindicated.'

Bapu had described me to someone as *naram* and I wrote to ask what he had in mind.

I forget the connexion in which I used the adjective *naram* about you. *Naram* means soft, gentle, yielding, unsteady. All these adjectives can be applied to you in certain circumstances. I cannot recall the circumstance which prompted the use of that adjective and in what sense. If you cannot recall the connexion, do not trouble. It is enough for me to know, as I do know, that you regard no sacrifice too great for the pursuit of truth.

Later in the same year, I wrote Bapu a rather depressed letter, for which he rebuked me.

God has saved you for greater service. You must not give way to dejection. Dejection is the measure of one's want of faith. . . I understand the persecution to which you have been subjected. But that is the moment of your trial. Your faith must be immovable like the Himalayas. But they will suffer decay, not so your faith if it is worth anything. No, no, it won't do. You must cheer up. No more of idle sorrow.

He ended by sending 'a cartload of love' to Shamrao.

During the forties my links with Gandhi weakened. My closest friends among his followers, Jamnalal Bajaj and Mahadev Desai, died. With some of the others (except for his secretary Pyarelal) I found myself a little out of sympathy. For Gandhi my affection never wavered, but I allowed the differences between us to keep me away from him. I suffered a great disillusion when I discovered that the khadi programme was not suitable for our tribes. I have always been a strong supporter of handloom weaving, but spinning, for very poor people and in places where cotton did not grow, seemed to me artificial and uneconomic.

Gandhi's emphatic views on Prohibition (which I considered damaging to the tribes), his philosophy of sex-relations, especially as exaggerated by some of his followers (which I considered damaging to everybody), and what seemed to me a certain distortion of values—the excessive emphasis on diet, for example, further separated me from him. Today I feel very sorry about this, for it was in his last years that Gandhi reached his highest stature and I deprived myself of the warmth of his affection and the strength he would have given me during a difficult period. But it was a feeling about Truth that kept me from going to see him and from this point of view my instinct was right.

4

Bishops and Bayonets

Does the Bishop think that every sturdy bullock whom he tries to sacrifice to the Genius of Orthodoxy will not kick, and push, and toss ; that he will not if he can, shake the axe from his neck, and hurl his mitred butcher into the air ?

—Sydney Smith

DURING the next few years I moved slowly, but inevitably, away from the Church into a life of religious and intellectual freedom. The process was difficult and painful, for in the beginning I was intensely devoted to the Christian religion and to its expression in Anglo-Catholicism. I always dislike hurting people and unfortunately the controversies in which I was involved gave pain to my family and to many of my older friends.

There were two main points on which I came into conflict with the ecclesiastical authorities. The first was concerned with the Christian's part in politics, the second with his attitude to the non-Christian. My view was that it was quite untrue, as so many of the clergy and officials used to say at this time, that 'Christianity had nothing to do with politics'. I insisted, as Gandhi insisted, that 'religion' had an important place in political life and that the Christian community not only had a right but a duty to bring its message and spirit into public affairs. On this subject generally I set out my views in *Christ and Satyagraha*, in which I called a great deal of evidence from the Fathers of the Church and advanced religious thinkers of modern times to maintain the right and even the duty of the Christian to overthrow a foreign or despotic Government by non-violent means.

I will discuss the question of conversion later, for my

immediate difficulties arose from political rather than theological problems. So long as I was living in the diocese of Bombay there was no actual breach with the Church, though the bishop and archdeacon were, naturally enough, perturbed by what I and my friends were doing. My visit to Peshawar had greatly disturbed the ecclesiastical authorities. Even the Indian Bishop of Dornakal wrote me a reproachful letter and the Bishop of Bombay, not dear Champagne Palmer but his rather dehydrated successor, wrote that 'I am sorry to be more and more unhappy about you. This is because it does seem clear that you are now an emissary of Congress rather than of Christ. I cannot otherwise account for your going to the N.W.F. Province.' It did not occur to any of them that to attempt to apply Christian principles to a situation of misery and tension could be a Christian act.

But it became worse later, for when we decided to go to Karanjia in the Central Provinces we had to move out of Bombay, where I had a certain amount of support, into the diocese of Nagpur where I was friendless and unknown. I had to come to terms with a new Bishop. Shamrao and I met him in the house of the Deputy Commissioner at Bilaspur and at first (not having seen my police dossier) he was very friendly. But after we went to Karanjia there began a rather extraordinary correspondence from which I will give some extracts, for they illustrate the attitude of the Anglican Church in India at that time and also reveal the kind of struggle I had towards my own spiritual freedom. I will now turn to the letters and the goal to which they led.

In the middle of February 1932, the Bishop wrote to me at Karanjia:

I fear there is going to be a lot of trouble about your being permitted to stay in the Mandla District. I wrote to Mr Irwin (the Commissioner), who promptly replied to me that he had already personally recommended that you should be deported from India for your activities in Jubbulpore. I have seen some of the evidence that was placed before Mr Irwin and really, on that, I do not wonder that he had made this recommendation.

The Bishop continued by insisting that I should take the Oath of Allegiance to the King-Emperor, an oath which even

at that date was not constitutionally required from clergy of the Church of India, as well as the Oath of Canonical Obedience to himself. About the second, there was no question, but the meaning of the first was interpreted by the Bishop as follows:

The meaning that I always attach to it is perfectly clear and straightforward. First of all I consider that the Clergy should belong to no political party. It is their duty to fit people to do their duty as good citizens in that state of life into which it shall please God to call them. They therefore should be prepared to support whatever is right and just regardless of political parties.

The King-Emperor himself is not satisfied with the present methods of governing India and has directed that changes be made. Any priest therefore who takes the Oath of Allegiance is bound to separate himself from any party which adopts unconstitutional and illegal methods of political agitation.

In reply, I wrote to the Bishop to say that, although I would have no difficulty

. . . in repeating the Oath of Allegiance in the Church of England, it would be wrong for me to take it in the Church of India which is free of state control and does not lay this obligation on its clergy.

If no Congressman can be a member of the Church, you are yourself identifying the Church with a particular political party, and you are thereby closing its doors against the very flower of India, men and women who command the devotion and allegiance of the great bulk of people in this country, and into whose hands we shall have to transfer the reins of government in a year or two. I cannot see any meaning in the freedom of the Church of India unless it is to be the Church of the people of India, whose mouthpiece and representative is the National Congress. Congressmen do not forfeit the right to be members of Christ because they adopt the method of civil disobedience, which is the ancient and legitimate right of every people which cannot get justice by constitutional means.

The Church, in the words of St Augustine, is a city which 'summoneth its citizens from all tribes, and collecteth its pilgrim fellowship from all languages, taking no heed of what is diverse in manners or laws or institutions'. It must enfold within its arms of love everyone in India. . . . There is nothing

in the Gospel of Jesus Christ to justify your Lordship's identification of the universal Church with party politics, or in penalizing me for my political opinions.

I am not a member of the Congress, and I do not understand your Lordship's reference to my liability to be arrested as being a member of an illegal Association. As a Christian, however, I naturally have the liveliest sympathy for an organization which has adopted into its political programme so much of the spirit and teaching of Jesus Christ, and which has taken as its weapon not armed force, but the truthful and non-violent method of Satyagraha which represents a transformation of the war-principle by the Sermon on the Mount. Nor need any Christian be ashamed of following Mahatma Gandhi, the most sublime and Christ-like figure now living on this planet.

I have never spoken as a party man, nor am I regarded as such by Indians. I do not remember giving a public lecture without proclaiming the Gospel of truth, love and sacrifice, that our first debt is to the poor, that we must forgive our enemies and that it is love which must in the future regulate the relationships of great peoples.

Shortly afterwards we were visited by the Bishop in person at Karanjia, and I will reproduce my own account of the interview which I wrote immediately afterwards.

The Bishop arrived in Karanjia, with two C.M.S. missionaries, and, since we had no chairs, they had to sit on the floor, rather uncomfortably with their boots on. We had a long conversation which resulted more or less in a deadlock. The Bishop could not, he said, have anything to do with us, if we had anything to do with the Mahatma and his followers. Gandhi was the great enemy of Christ in modern India: C. F. Andrews was contemptuously dismissed as a 'recreant priest'; Congress was doing 'devil's work' and had substituted brute force for Satyagraha. The Bishop even took exception to khadi. If we did anything to promote spinning and weaving among the Gonds, he couldn't license me, presumably because the homespun uniform was the mark of a Congressman.

At this point, the younger of the two C.M.S. missionaries, who had arrived in India a month previously, exclaimed in a very solemn voice, 'I do not see any use, my Lord, in discussing the affairs of Christ with a renegade. In fact, Mr Elwin is more than

a renegade, he is a traitor: he has betrayed his country and his Lord and has thrown in his lot with their enemies. What profit is there in discussing the things of the Kingdom with such a man?'

This, almost too good to be true, was the sort of remark which compensates the sorrows of a lifetime, and my delighted smile was so obvious that I am sorry to say the poor fish blushed deeply, looking, as Bingo Little once did, like the Soul's Awakening done in pink.

'No priest of mine,' continued the Bishop, 'may have any political views.' I began to give some precedents, including St Thomas Aquinas and the Archbishop of York. 'I don't care about the Archbishop. In my diocese there will be nothing of the kind.'

'But if a Congressman wishes to become a Christian priest?'

'Then he must forswear the Congress.'

'But your clergy have the Union Jack in their churches. Isn't that politics?'

'Ah, but the Union Jack is the standard of the Cross.'

'A bloody Cross,' exclaimed Shamrao, unable to contain himself any longer.

I tried again, while the unfortunate Bishop shifted from ham to ham in an effort to get comfortable on our uneven cow-dunged floor.

'You, my Lord, were a Chaplain in the war. You lived among those whose hands were stained with blood, and whose profession was to kill others. You gave them your moral support (the Bishop nodded), and you did all you could to help your side to win. I have simply been a sort of Chaplain to men whose hands are not blood-stained but who are using the weapons of non-violence and truth. Why, if I am wrong, were you right? Haven't Congressmen souls?'

The Bishop looked incredulous, but could only say, 'Well, it takes a great deal to save the soul of a Congressman.'

There was a lot more, but the sum of the whole matter was that unless we were prepared to sever all connexion with Gandhi and his followers, even to the extent of dropping khadi work, the Bishop would have nothing whatever to do with us.

He concluded with these intimidating words: 'You are a

traitor to the cause of Christ. You are a traitor to the King-Emperor. You are doing the work of the devil.'

And he got up and went, only just turning to Shamrao. 'As for you, I will have nothing whatever to do with you.'

After his return to Nagpur, the Bishop wrote me another letter, pointing out what an undesirable and dangerous person I was, and explaining that he had asked me to leave the Congress . . .

. . . because I love the Gonds and I am not keen that through any act of mine they should be the people who should provide any part of the 'million lives' and the 'rivers of blood' that the Mahatma says he is willing to expend in the attainment of his political aims. Those aims appear to be the re-establishment of some form of the Vedic Religion and culture in India, when his party has the power.

If an Indian Christian desires to be a nationalist and to see India self-governing he has all my sympathy and, so long as his activities are constitutional, my support. But you have repeatedly told me that your sympathies are with Mahatma Gandhi and the Congress party—i.e., definitely Hindu and opposed to the spread of Christianity and that you put their political ideas above your duties as a priest to preach Christ.

In November of the same year, the Bishop wrote again.

As I wrote to you, the Commissioner in reply to my letter on your behalf stated that he had already applied to Government to have you removed from his Division and also from India. Honestly I do not blame him or Government. Your anti-Government and political activities have been very serious indeed—as I am now learning.

The only condition on which I can support you and approve of your working in this diocese is that you definitely sever your connexion with Congress. It is an illegal association and no priest of the Church should be connected with it in any way. It is definitely causing dispeace and hatred when all men of good will, who love India, are straining every effort to bring peace and progress. I urge you therefore to sever your connexion with it completely and to turn to your work—as a priest in the Church. So long as you keep your political opinions to yourself, you may hold what you please. One can only pray that you will outgrow your present opinions.

A fortnight later, I wrote to the Bishop to take my first important step towards severing my connexion with the Church, and declared that I proposed not to apply for a licence and realized that I would therefore be unable to function as a priest any longer. Three years later, I took the further step of surrendering my priesthood altogether and at about the same time I withdrew from membership of the Church even as a layman. I wrote again to the long-suffering Bishop.

My reason is that the Church of India, though nominally free, is still virtually under the control of a foreign government. While serving in the diocese of Bombay the extent of this control was less apparent, but my relations with you have raised the problems arising from it in an acute form.

I hope you will forgive me if I point out—in no spirit of hostility but in order to make my point clear—some examples of this. You address me on envelopes marked 'Government of India': your letters bear the imprint 'On His Majesty's Service'. You draw your salary from the coffers of Government: the Union Jack flies—illegally—over your Cathedral. When I asked you for a licence, you made no inquiries about my spiritual or theological qualifications: you demanded what you had no constitutional right to demand, an oath of allegiance to the King-Emperor. When we last met you concluded our conversation by saying that I was doing the work of the devil. When the private house of Seth Jammalal Bajaj was declared illegal and occupied by the police a notification was sent to me; but this notification came, not from the Home Department of Government, but from your office. You have refused—on political grounds—even to consider one of my co-workers for ordination, although he has had three years' training in a religious house.

Neither you nor your fellow-Bishops have raised a word of protest against the ruthless and brutal policy of repression that in the last three years has attempted to crush the national spirit of India. Instead you have justified this repression, even claiming that flogging is a legitimate punishment for non-violent political offenders. In your dealings with me, you have played the part, not of a father in God, but of an agent of the foreign government.

Between this state-religion and the religion of the New Testament I can trace no connexion. It was not the disciples who

cried 'We have no king but Caesar'. We never see our Exemplar sitting at ease at Caesar's table, but only standing in rags before his judgement-seat. I would feel the same if the Church allowed itself to be subservient to Mr Gandhi's government. Where the Government does not exist at the will of the people the position is even worse.

I have thrown in my lot with India. For the time being I am outside active politics, being bound by the restrictions laid on me by Government. I have never intended our ashram to be a centre of political agitation. But I am unwaveringly of the opposition. If I am silent, it is not because my heart is changed, but because I am a prisoner of honour to the Government, and until they release me I shall behave as such. But my heart and my spirit is with those who are suffering, in so Christ-like a spirit, in the jails. How can I work under one who is practically an official of the Government which I regard as hostile to the interests of the country which I love?

In November 1935, I finally wrote to the Metropolitan of Calcutta:

I am writing formally to announce to you my decision to be no longer a member of the Church of England either as a priest or a communicant. . . . I leave the Church of my baptism without a trace of bitterness and hostility, with nothing but love and reverence for the great tradition in which I have grown up. But it will be dishonest for me to remain longer.

This, however, was not enough. The position of an Anglican priest is not merely spiritual: there are social and legal implications. When I went to England in 1936, I consulted Archbishop Temple and in November of that year signed a Deed of Relinquishment stating that 'having been admitted to the office of Priest in the Church of England I do hereby in pursuance of the Clerical Disabilities Act 1870 declare that I relinquish all rights, privileges, advantages and exemptions of the Office as by law belonging to it'.

It may seem strange today in India to talk about bringing religion into politics, for one of our most important tasks now is to keep 'religion' out of them. But, of course, when Gandhi said religion he did not mean that communal religion which has constantly distracted and divided India and led to his own death. He meant, as I meant, the true spirit of religion, whether

that be Christianity, Islam, Hinduism or Buddhism. Even today this essential spirit of love and tolerance is as necessary in the public life in India (and all countries) as it was in Gandhi's own day.

We may remember also that at this time we did not think of the Congress as a political party. This was one of the main points made by Gandhi at the Round Table Conference—that Congress was not a party, but represented the whole nation.

I think what really outraged me in my controversy with the bishops (for the Bishop of Nagpur was far from being my only opponent among them) was their attitude to war. Their opposition to the national movement was a temporary phase: since Independence some bishops dress in khadi and preach on Gandhi: on a recent visit the Archbishop of Canterbury laid a wreath on Gandhi's tomb at Rajghat. But war, violent war, was another matter. I became a pacifist in my Oxford days and have never swerved from my belief and it continually horrified me to find the official churches not only not condemning war but even actively supporting it.

I have put in these letters for they were part of my life. They are, of course, a young man's letters and behind them are the reluctant pangs of an abdicating faith. They are not bitter—they are too robust for that—but they are not kind. I had not yet learnt compassion for the rich and powerful. I am afraid I was a real headache to this and other bishops. It would probably not have been necessary to write today as I did then. India has changed and the Indian Church has changed with it. The Indian flag has replaced the Union Jack on the spires of Cathedrals. Even the Church of England has broadened.

Yet only recently when a beautiful child of three years died and was buried, not having been baptised, in consecrated ground, an Indian bishop made some sour remarks (which kindly persons at once passed on to the saddened mother) that this was most improper.

Even now what strikes me about conventionally religious people is the way they are tied up in spiritual red tape, and particularly new converts in India are apt to be very hard, fanatical in their beliefs, and cruel to those who stray from the strict path of what they consider morality. Some of the

Protestant Churches in Assam today excommunicate someone if he drinks rice-beer or takes part in a dance. For sexual lapses a whole machinery of public exposure and punishment is devised. A beautiful young tribal girl, a graduate, who showed every sign of going ahead in her profession, became pregnant before her marriage. She was so terrified of what the Christian leaders of her Church would say and do that she told no one until, when it was far too late, she tried to force an abortion and died of it. Had the Christian people been more gentle and more understanding this need never have happened. If only everyone had more love for love's failures!

My first conflict with the Church authorities was over politics. Presently this conflict resolved itself, for as I became more and more engrossed in literary and scientific work, I had less and less to do with politics, though my opinions remained the same. But a deeper issue remained and continues to this day, for the problem of religious conversion or cultural change is as interesting to the anthropologist as to the priest.

No one can withhold admiration from the Christian missionaries. They have brought to India the spirit of adventure and dedication. Hundreds of them have gone to live in the remotest places, denying themselves the comforts and amenities of life for many years. They have been the pioneers in the treatment of leprosy, championed the underdog, befriended the untouchables and taken a leading part in sponsoring the cause of the tribal people. They have done much for the languages of India, especially the tribal languages. In the fields of education and medicine their work has been distinguished by professional competence and human affection for children and the sick.

My own collision with the missionary movement did not depend on my estimate of the value of its work, but it went very far back to temperamental and intellectual attitudes of my Oxford days.

About half-way through my time there the influence of the mystical literature which I was then studying so eagerly began to make itself felt, and I began to think of religion not as a matter of saving yourself or your neighbour from sin and damnation or converting him to your own theological opinions,

but as the quest of the soul for spiritual realities. The mystics have always been notoriously lukewarm about missions, and imperceptibly this attitude began to influence me, so that by the time I had left Oxford I was no longer interpreting my religion in terms of converting other people to it at all.

It is thus incorrect to say that I came to India as a missionary and then changed my mind. I was never a missionary in the ordinary sense. I joined the Christa Seva Sangh because I understood that its main interests were scholarship, mysticism, reparation rather than evangelism. Before long, however, I found a strong division of opinion among its members.

For example, Father Winslow had never really thought the problem through to its logical conclusion, with the result that he frequently made contradictory statements. He would tell Hindus of his horror of proselytization; he would then explain to Christians the necessity for conversion. Proselytization to the European generally implies the taking of an unfair advantage of a victim. In times of famine many missionaries at one time undoubtedly took advantage of people's hunger to change their religious allegiance. But conversion, said Father Winslow, by which we mean sharing with others the best thing in one's own life, is a very different matter. It was the realization of this discrepancy which was one of the main reasons for my leaving the Society.

When I first went to Karanjia I was still thinking in terms of the Christian religion and my idea of reparation was a typically Christian one. But even then I did not have the least desire to preach my religion to anyone, still less to convert any of the Gonds to Christianity. It was enough that I should try to interpret life in Christian terms.

This was partly due, as I have said, to my Oxford studies in mysticism, partly due to the influence of Gandhi and my growing knowledge of other religions and reverence for them. Although I have never accepted the facile doctrine that all religions are the same, I did not feel it was my business to judge between them and to advocate one at the expense of others. I had also already developed my dislike of imposing on other people and especially on the tribal people. While I could see the point of a missionary entering into religious argument with

a Brahmin, it seemed to me that to chase after a simple tribesman was rather too much like shooting a sitting bird.

Naturally this unwillingness to co-operate in the evangelistic mission of the Church was another point of conflict with the authorities, and even some of my more liberal friends continued to send me kindly rebukes for some time to come.

Father Winslow, for example, held the view that, although the spiritual and intelligent Hindu might well be left alone to live in his own community with nothing more than the inspiration of the Christian spirit, it was necessary, when dealing with the tribal people and untouchables, to bring them right inside the Christian community and Church.

No less a person than C. F. Andrews wrote to me several times in a rather similar strain. In a letter written on board s.s. *Maloja* and dated 12 November 1933, he says:

There is one thing that I think you should avoid and that is going too far when you take up a cause and thus losing the balance of judgement. I know that this is 'calling the kettle black', and I am quite aware of being the 'pot'; but all the same you and I have to learn by experience and we shall both lose a great deal if we lose our sense of proportion. For instance, while what you say is undoubtedly true about primitive people, there are hideous savageries which are unclean and diabolical, such as I myself have witnessed in Central Africa and Fiji. These may not actually exist among Gonds, but I wonder whether I am quite right in saying even this much. Such things as human sacrifice and witchcraft under the spell of religious dread and even cannibal orgies are common in Central Africa. And life in this primitive form becomes often a ghastly terror, impossible to describe. It would be difficult to over-estimate the freedom from these primitive terrors wherewith Christ has set us free.

And I cannot at all agree with Bapu that these forms of 'religion' which are really evil in their essence, are not to be condemned, and those who practise them are not to be converted. I believe in South India the devil worship is absolutely hideous in some of its forms and utterly unworthy of Man made in the image of God.

Once, at Muttra, I saw another sight which filled me with loathing and disgust. It was cow-worship in its most gross form—the literal lowering of the human spirit by *pooja* offered with

all the ceremonial of worship to a cow, while frenzy increased every moment. Those who were present thought that I would rejoice in the scene because of my love of animals, and specially of the cow, but this mania on the part of human beings, who were otherwise perfectly sane, did nothing but disgust me.

I am writing all this out because I myself have gone to the utmost limits of toleration, bordering on weakness, and I can see the same danger in your own case.

Thus to turn back to yourself, while you will help the Gonds by revealing to us all their most beautiful characteristics, you will be doing no good at all to them or to us if you over-idealize them as I tended to over-idealize Hinduism at one time, with consequences such as I have hinted at in this letter. I was as young as you are when I did this. Now that I am much older I do not want in the least to lose my first love, but I do wish to gain wisdom and discernment.

And again, C. F. Andrews wrote on 31 March, 1938:

Have you not gone too far in following Bapu about 'conversion'? I fully accept that these hill tribes must be freed from the suspicion and fear that you have some ulterior motive. I would not wish you to take the ordinary standpoint with regard to them. But the joy which we have in our own hearts owing to the love of Christ must find its expression, because it is the one motive power in our own lives. Bapu would seem to suggest that even to wish in one's own heart to give to another that joy, which has been the strength and stay of one's own life, is itself wrong.

I cannot possibly go with him there; and if I could not speak quite freely about Christ in the Ashram at Shantiniketan, I should feel most unhappy: but everything there is as natural as possible and there are no inhibitions. At the same time, it is a matter of honour and trust with me there that I should never take any unfair advantage—which is what Christ meant by 'proselytizing' in the only sentence where He used the word.

I am afraid Andrews' reproaches fell on deaf ears and I have always believed that Mr Nehru's view (though not stated expressly in relation to missionaries) was the correct one:

I am alarmed when I see—not only in this country but in other great countries too—how anxious people are to shape others according to their own image or likeness, and to impose

on them their particular way of living. We are welcome to our way of living, but why impose it on others? This applies equally to the national and international fields. In fact, there would be more peace in the world if people were to desist from imposing their way of living on other people and countries.

Mere politics, or even the more serious problem of spreading the Gospel, would not by themselves have driven me from the spiritual and material security of the Church. I think this book will show that I was an intensely religious person and was at one time almost passionately attached to one aspect of the Christian religion. My break with the Church was essentially a matter of belief. I once had a talk with Bishop Gore and told him that I had doubts about, for example, the truth of the Bible, the Virgin Birth and the Resurrection. 'All this, my dear boy,' he said, 'is nothing. The real snag in the Christian, or any religion, is the belief in God. If you can swallow God, you can swallow anything.' There came a time when I could not.

My experience in Gandhi's ashram made it impossible to believe in an exclusive form of Christianity and, whatever broadminded people may say, once you take the exclusiveness out of Christianity a great deal has to go with it. After several years of painful struggle about the relations of Church and State on one side and my own theological beliefs on the other, everything suddenly and quite naturally fell away from me and I was free. It was a dramatic conversion, but in reverse. It was such a great liberation, bringing so much freedom, that I look back to that moment with the greatest happiness and without a moment of regret.

S

Dear as the Moon

*To me this little village is dear as the moon,
And from the great city it has dragged me away.*
—Gond folk-song

I

A DELHI news-magazine recently referred to me as 'that freakish Englishman, the brilliance of whose eccentricities even Oxford could not dim', though it admitted that I had 'been able to discover poetry and art in strange places'. I do not resent this curious judgement, for there is nothing very discreditable in being eccentric, but I wonder whether it is really true. Is it eccentric to live in beautiful scenery in the hills among some of the most charming people in the country, even though they may be ignorant and poor? I would have thought that on other standards it was far more eccentric to live in the noise, the dirt and disturbance of a town, to waste one's time in clubs, playing silly games with cards or knocking little balls about on tennis court or golf course. To go to a village to find a cause that is worth living for, to escape from the infantile gossip and the tedious recreations of civilization may be unusual, but I do not think there is anything specially eccentric about it.

Even some of my own habits of that time still seem to me practical rather than odd. For many years I lived in villages and did all my long tours barefoot and thus saved quite a lot of money. I never wore a hat and that has not only suited me but has again saved me a little money. I have never used hair-oil. It is only recently that I have started using a mirror for shaving, though I am afraid I have never gone so far as to economize on razor blades and shaving cream by growing a

beard. I seriously believe that simplicity in dress is far better, in view of the conditions and climate of the East, than to overload oneself with clothes.

All this may have been eccentric but I was comfortable and enjoyed myself. Nowadays I have become more conventional, though I have always been a little shaggy. Once, on arrival from tour in Howrah Station, I was approached by an excise officer who wanted to search my baggage for contraband drugs and, when I asked why he had picked me out from hundreds of other passengers, he replied, 'Because, Sir, you do not look like a first-class English gentleman.'

On a much earlier occasion my attire had caused trouble. Sir Mortimer Wheeler once invited me to dinner at one of the old-style pre-Independence clubs in Simla. It was bitterly cold and I had no coat. I did not see any point in catching a chill and so went to the club wrapped up in a blanket, which I deposited in the hands of a shocked butler in the hall. Wheeler was later hauled over the coals by the committee for inviting the wrong kind of guest into the club premises and I believe that even now, whenever my name comes up, he demands, 'What is Elwin wearing now?' I am told in fact that I resemble the P.G.W. character who looked as if he had been poured into his clothes and had forgotten to say 'When!'.

There is no doubt that I was often lonely on one side of me, in spite of the delightful company of the tribal people. One year in Patangarh during five months of the rains I saw just five people from the outside world. Often, on tour or in the village when Shamrao was away, I did not speak a word of English for three or four weeks at a time. This drove me in on myself, made me sometimes oversensitive, but it helped me to understand lonely people, and gave me a wonderful opportunity for writing and research. When we reflect on the enormous waste of time we all suffer in casual conversation, I think I am to be envied rather than condemned as eccentric.

From 1931 to 1953 I spent most of my time in houses of mud and thatch. I will shortly describe the beautiful mud house that I finally built at Patangarh. When we started we had very cramped quarters and in our first ashram, which included a small chapel, four living rooms and a veranda, there wasn't

room to swing a cat, even if we had wished to indulge in such an unGandhian practice. The great advantage of a mud house is that when you get tired of it you can knock down a wall and rearrange your rooms. If necessary, you can knock the house down altogether and move the timber and bamboo to some other site. Even though a thatched roof often lets in the rain, it is cool in summer and does not make the terrific noise which is caused by the corrugated iron sheets which have become a fashion in parts of India. We had mud floors which were washed every day or two with cowdung. This may sound a little repulsive to anyone who has not tried it, but actually it is very pleasant and hygienic. If you once accept that it is a good and natural thing to live out of the way among tribal people in their own hills and forests, all the other things follow naturally from it.

II

It is easy to find the position of the little village of Karanjia even on a map of the world. Trace the course of the great Narbada river from its mouth on the west coast to its sacred source amid the eastern spurs of the Satpura Hills. Go a hair's breadth from its tail and there is Karanjia.

Here above the village where we had our original shed was a little hill, a *tikera*, overlooking the Pilgrim's Way that goes up to Amarkantak, eleven miles distant, where the Narbada rises, and on it we built the small huts of mud, bamboo and thatch which constituted the 'ashram'. In those early days all round us lay the vast mysterious forest, whose silence was broken at night only by the roar of the tiger or the high melancholy call of the deer.

The bulk of the people round us were Gonds, a great tribe, over three million in number, who are distributed all over central India. They will be found in the remote and malaria-smitten wilds of Chhindwara, by the wooded rivers of Betul, among the lovely hills of Seoni where Kipling's Mowgli hunted with the wolf-pack, in the great evergreen sal forests of Balaghat, in their ancient kingdom of Chanda, in

Bastar and Andhra, and amidst the spurs of the sacred Maikal Hills.

We have little knowledge of how they lived until, in the 14th century, we find them established as Rajas in different parts of central India, which at that time was known as the Gondwana. Their government seems to have been tolerant and kindly; the country prospered; forts, tanks and wells were built; the palaces were filled with wealth. Akbar found a hundred jars of gold coins, much jewellery and a thousand elephants in the fort of Chauragarh. The kings of Chanda built royal tombs, lakes and palaces and surrounded their city for seven miles with a great wall. Herds and flocks increased and even the peasants, it is said, paid tribute in elephants and gold mohurs.

But the Gond kings had no organization, no ability for war, and faced with the invasion of the Maratha chieftains in the eighteenth century their kingdoms collapsed almost without resistance, and they were driven deep into the recesses of the forest. By the beginning of the nineteenth century they had split up into a number of wild and warlike groups, making a living by plundering caravans and raiding the smaller towns from their mountain strongholds. Under British rule they grew pacific and settled on the land and took to their present occupation of farming. But now they suffered oppression and exploitation, for there soon came merchants and liquor-venders, cajoling, tricking, swindling them in their ignorance and simplicity until bit by bit their broad acres dwindled and they sank into the poverty in which many of them still live today. This poverty was not only material; at the same time there came a poverty of culture. For this reason it is not easy to speak of the culture of the Gonds, for it varies greatly from area to area and what there is today is only a shadow of what must once have been. The Gonds have few arts or crafts, they do not weave and only rarely carve in wood. Their pots and their baskets are usually made for them by others. They have adopted to a considerable degree the religion of their Hindu neighbours. Their language, which is a Dravidian tongue, is now spoken by less than half their people.

Their culture survives in their memories of the past, for they have an extensive mythology, in the legendary history of their

old kings and heroes, and in the dance and song at which they are still expert. There is a story that long ago, at the beginning of all things, there were seven Gond brothers who made a feast in honour of Bura Pen, their great god. They spread sumptuous offerings before him, but he did not appear. Nothing could tempt him. Then they asked their youngest brother to make music for them but he refused, and it was only when they heaped gifts upon him, gold and silver, jewellery and all manner of ornaments, that he consented. Then with a gourd and a piece of wood and a strand of wire (some say it was a hair of his own head) he made the first fiddle and played so exquisitely on it that the god came down to bless the feast.

Gond poetry is simple and symbolic, free of all literary conventions and allusions. It is a poetry of earth and sky, of forest, hill and river, of the changing seasons and the varied passions of men, a poetry of love, naked and unashamed, unchecked by any inhibition or restraint. The bulk of the poems are songs of the dance and the most poetic of them are perhaps the songs of the great Karma dance which is common to many of the primitive tribes of central India. This dance symbolizes the growth of the green branches of the forest in the spring; sometimes a tree is set up in the village and the people dance round it. The men leap forward to a rapid roll of drums and the women sway back before them. Then bending low to the ground the women dance, their feet moving in perfect rhythm, until the group of singers advances towards them like the steady urge of wind coming and going among the tree-tops, and the girls swing to and fro in answer. They often dance all night until, lost in a rapture of movement, they surprise the secret of the Lila, the ecstasy of creation, that ancient zest in the glory of which God made all things.

This is the one great cultural interest of the people. A girl-dancer is compared by the Gonds to a lovely tree moving to the unseen power of nature, and one of their riddles asks, 'There is a dumb bird that sits on a beautiful tree; shake the tree and the bird awakes and sings.' The answer is, 'The anklets on the feet of a girl who goes to the dance.'

I have said that it is not easy to speak of a culture of the Gonds as they are today. And yet what is culture? Is it not

something more than art, religion, language, tradition? There is a very true culture that depends mainly on character, and in this sense the Gonds are a highly cultured people. They have royal blood in their veins, and even the poorest and simplest of them has a strength of purpose, a dignity, a redeeming sense of humour, and a courage in face of the disasters of life that anyone may envy. The honest peasant in his field, the devotee of Mother Earth, drawing his strength from the elemental forces of Nature, is in this sense as truly cultured as the most sophisticated intellectual.

Besides the Gonds we had the Pardhans, the charming and romantic minstrels who have preserved the Gond epics, and the wilder Baigas and Agarias. None of those living in our neighbourhood were what tourists call colourful. They had all lost their own language. As compared with the people of eastern India, one would not call them tribal at all. Moreover, the population of Karanjia and some of the neighbouring villages was very mixed. There were Hindus of various castes, and even a few Mohammedans, and this meant that from the very beginning we did not take an exclusive interest in the tribes but were concerned with everybody who was poor or exploited.

III

As I have already suggested, our plan was to build up a small settlement to help the people and to base our policy and way of life on a mixture of Franciscan and Gandhian ideas. We gradually recruited a small body of workers which included two or three Christians, a Mohammedan, some Hindus and a few of the local tribal people. The idea was that each member should have complete freedom to follow his own religion—in those days we thought very much in religious terms—and that we should have regular prayers based on the Sabarmati model. We organized ourselves into a small Society, which we first called the Gond Seva Mandal. In 1949 we reorganized ourselves as the Tribal Welfare and Research Unit (T W A R U).

The leading spirit of this little company was Shamrao, who in Karanjia became an entirely new person. He has always had

an extraordinary warmth and humanity about him, and within a very short time of our arrival in Karanjia he had established himself as the Chhota Bhai, the little brother of the people, and as their guide, philosopher and friend. It soon became the custom for any tribesman who was in trouble to 'go to Chhota Bhai' for help. Once, when an old woman lay dying, she would not see any of her relations but called continually for Shamrao. One day a Gond friend said to him: 'Before you came here the moustaches of those who oppressed us turned up to the sky, but now they droop to the ground.' He has never been an outsider; he is never superior; never looks down on anyone or tries to 'uplift' him. To him every individual is a world and he accepts each child or growing youth or poor old woman, not as a 'case' but as a human personality, a sacred thing to be respected and loved, in whose sorrows and anxieties he himself must share. He is always accessible and in Karanjia used to be compared to a Hindu widow (old style) at the beck and call of everyone who wanted him, no task being too small, too humble or too unpleasant.

In the last eight years, he and his wife Kusum have carried on, with very little money and every circumstance of discouragement, by themselves but have continued to bring comfort and succour to hundreds of the poorest people. As someone said of Charles Lamb, Shamrao 'is only at ease in the old arms of humanity'.

The ashram looked exactly like part of the village which lay around and below it, for it was our policy from the first to build everything in the Gond style. All the houses were of mud and thatch, the walls covered with Gond decorations, and there was no furniture which could not be matched in the village itself. At the same time, the ashram was different, in that it attempted to demonstrate what a village might be like. The huts were clean and well-ventilated, everywhere there were flowers and fruit trees, proper houses for poultry and cattle, and pits for refuse and manure. The Gond visitor, therefore, found himself perfectly at home, and yet at the same time, even without a word being spoken, had the chance to learn something that he could take back to his own village.

To enter the settlement there was a long flight of steps which

led you first to the little mud Chapel of St Francis, which was used by the Christian members. For this we had a fairly large court surrounded by a bamboo wall plastered with mud, and the chapel was in the middle of it, a little building rather like a Gond shrine. In front were some absurd rooms, in which I was just able to stand up, where we kept our books and spent most of our time. Outside the chapel was a flagstaff (essential to any place of worship in the Gondwana) bearing a saffron flag, which was fitted into a coudunged platform on which grew the sacred basil tree. All round the courtyard we planted flowers in memory of St Francis's wish that gardens should be made that all who saw them should remember the Eternal Beauty. The tribal people are very fond of flowers and I have always done what I could to encourage them. In front of the whole building was a flat space on the edge of the hill, where the morning and evening prayers were held, and from here there was a wonderful view of forest, valley and hills.

The chapel and compound cost us a hundred rupees to build. At that time wages were two-and-a-half annas a day for women and three-and-a-half annas for men. We created a storm among the local officials and merchants by raising these to the pitiful rates of three annas and four annas. On the other hand, since paddy was at that time twenty-three seers to the rupee, an anna was worth a great deal more than it is now.

You went along the hill, which was sheltered by trees, many of them laden with sweet-smelling flowers, and reached the dispensary. This was well equipped with medicines, and villagers came to it from a radius of forty miles. It was the only dispensary along a main road of seventy-five miles, though there was a small Government dispensary across country, twenty miles away.

Next came a kitchen, built in Gond style round a small compound, dining-room and store-house, and a vegetable garden. Fruit trees were planted in the neighbourhood of all the buildings—mango, plantain, papaya, orange, fig, sour-lime, guava: we used to distribute seedlings and seed. Next door was a guest-house, where in-patients, pilgrims and other visitors could stay. Further along the hill was a small Museum, a very popular building which contained pictures, simple books, toy

models and a Hornby train. Then came the largest of our establishments, the school and hostel. There was room for fifty boarders and a hundred others. The school was co-educational and a very fair proportion of girls attended. Here also was a carpenter's shop and a tailoring department. Beyond the school the hill became wild and thickly wooded, and a narrow path wound in and out of trees till it reached a gate beyond which no one might go without permission. This led to the Leper Refuge, where fifteen or sixteen lepers lived and received treatment in a beautiful little home, with a garden in which they took great pride.

This was the centre. Round it, hidden away in remote valleys or in the midst of the forest, there were eight branch ashrams within a radius of as many miles. Each of these had its resident worker, school, Hindi library and small dispensary, fitted with the simplest medicines. Once a week the workers gathered at Karanjia for conference. Model classes were given, and the plan of work for the coming week decided. This was necessary because the workers were themselves villagers without any very advanced education, and in this way they not only took their part in the fight against illiteracy, but also trained themselves to be leaders of their own people. There were between three and four hundred children in the schools, most of them belonging to the Gond and other tribes.

At that time in central India venereal disease was almost endemic among the tribal people. There was very little syphilis and what there was attacked the people in a rather mild way. I have wondered whether the fact that they suffered constantly from malaria might have had anything to do with it, for it has sometimes been supposed that malaria acts as a slight antidote. We were greatly distressed, however, by the way the villagers suffered from gonorrhoea. They got it very badly and it was a tragic thing to see young men and girls so full of love and natural happiness suffering from a disease which today, in view of the new treatment by penicillin, hardly matters at all but was then cruel and disabling.

There are still quite a number of people in the world who think that prophylactic measures against these diseases, and even their treatment, are morally wrong since they make sin

easier. I think that if any of them could see what we used to see in Mandla they would change their opinion. A great deal of freedom was given to young men and women before marriage and it was ridiculous to imagine that Old Nobodaddy Aloft, as Blake once put it, was watching their delights with jealous eyes and punishing them for pleasures which he himself presumably could not share.

It was a very wonderful thing when first the sulphonamides, and then the antibiotics, came to bring relief to thousands of people. Even then the danger was that patients who were relieved of their immediate symptoms would stop treatment before they were completely cured, and we had to try very hard to persuade them to go on long enough.

Even among the tribes there was a great deal of hypocrisy about these diseases, as indeed about sexual morality generally. A girl was not looked down upon for any freedom which she might take, provided there was no public scandal, especially with an outsider, that she did not get a baby and that she did not contract a venereal disease. It is the same, to a large extent, in modern society, where the idea that the venereal diseases are a punishment for sin has led to a shameful attitude of scorn towards those who are so unfortunate as to contract them. Nowadays we generally speak of Hansen's Disease instead of leprosy because of the stigma which the older name carries. I have sometimes wondered whether we could not have another name for the venereal diseases. In actual fact, I believe that the WHO has suggested trepanomatosi for syphilis. The classic account of an attack of gonorrhoea is in Boswell's *London Journal* and 'Boswell's Disease' would be a very suitable name for this distressing complaint. I do not think that that charming and wayward lover would mind.

At this time we saw things very simply: we had to work for the health of the community; we had to see that there was enough food and that it was properly cooked; we had to help the people to get and save more money, and finally we had to give them sufficient knowledge to enable them to resist their exploiters and to widen their vision of the world. The first of these aims is secured by dispensaries, health propaganda, and the cleaning of villages; the second by the improvement of

agriculture and the education of girls, especially if they can be given some training in the domestic arts and sciences. The third and fourth are also to no small extent the fruits of education. The educated Gond is less likely to be swindled when he takes his goods to market; if he has learnt a little carpentry or tailoring he can make a few things for sale, or at least mend his clothes and so make them last longer.

Above all, we had to rouse the people from their apathy. The prevailing attitude was that 'God has made us poor: it is no good trying to be anything else'. In a nearby village there was a very good pond where the people got their water. But one year heavy rain caused a breach in its bank and the water ran out. After that the village women had to walk two miles to the nearest river. A few days' work by the whole community could have repaired the pond and saved all the waste of time and energy. When we suggested it to them the Gonds said, 'We are poor men. What can we do?' In the end we had to mend the breach ourselves.

As time went on the people did become more alive to the possibility of prosperity and gradually a completely new spirit came to them. One day—but this was after Independence—a Gond woman walked into the dreaded police station and on being ordered out by the Sub-Inspector she said, 'But this is *our* police station, not yours. It belongs to the people.' And another day when a Brahmin Revenue official told one of the Gonds that it was useless to send his son to school, the Gond replied, 'Naturally you would think so, because you know that he would then get your job.'

I have described those early years at Karanjia in my *Leaves from the Jungle*, which originally appeared with a foreword by Romain Rolland, and was published by John Murray in 1936. It is not a book I have ever been very proud of, though it had a great success at the time and has recently been republished by the Oxford University Press. It does, however, give some picture of the strange, happy and exciting life we had during our first few years in the forest. The original success of this book was, I think, due to the humour of contrast, the idea of a clergyman, only recently away from Oxford, having some unusual experiences. Later, after I became part of the picture

and both I myself and other people had got used to it, things were not so funny and by the time I reached NEFA I found very little humour in the tribal situation, though I continue to find plenty of it in life as a whole: in fact, Ranjee Shahani has said that I try to discover 'the cosmic through the comic'.

The best thing that *Leaves from the Jungle* did for me was to give me a link with Murrays, of whom I saw a lot during a two-months' visit to London in 1936. The beautiful old Murray house, with its memories of Byron and Thackeray, in Albemarle Street, is more like a very good club than an office, and I spent many happy hours there reading proofs, talking to Jock Murray who introduced me to Gerald Heard and through him to Aldous Huxley, and sometimes attending parties, at one of which I met the memorable Freya Stark. I did not get on so well with another Murray author, Axel Munthe, to whom I observed that I had greatly enjoyed his *Bridge of San Luis Rey*, a remark which for some reason did not go down very well. *The Baiga*, which Murrays published later, was rather strong meat for some of the Directors, especially for Lord Gorell, but he was always exceptionally nice to me about it.

IV

We were always fond of having pets and I remembered Byron's bear whom, he said, he was training for a Fellowship; Herrick's pig who learnt to drink beer out of a tankard; Wordsworth's goldfish, cold 'but pure'; Rossetti's opossum who died in a cigar-box. Though we didn't reach these heights, what we had were a great attraction to the local people. The most striking of them was a splendid young leopardess, whom we kept in a large specially-erected hut with wooden bars. She was so tame that I could go inside it to receive her affectionate, if rather intimidating, embraces. Thousands of people used to come and see her but, unfortunately, one day when we were away on tour she broke the bars of her house and escaped. She paid a visit to the Leper Home but, when she tried to embrace the lepers in the true Franciscan spirit, they took fright and one of them shot her with his muzzle-loader.

Then there was a beautiful chital stag, and a succession of barking-deer, small, timid, affectionate.

Among birds, a pair of turkeys, whom Margaret Moore, one of our early visitors, named the Macbeths, stood first in dignity and importance. There were a number of little Macbeths, but they all died, a fate incident to baby turkeys. There was a waddle of geese, but they all turned out to be ladies. The doves multiplied, but were always being eaten by cats or panthers. We built an aviary, a large well-lighted building with trees in it. There was a pair of blue jays, very pretty birds but with the expression of irascible dons. There were three solemn green parrots, several mainas, and three lovely golden-brown *titur*, a sort of partridge. The barking-deer lived with them and became very friendly with them, so much so that one of them sometimes licked the birds with his active little tongue and removed most of their feathers.

And then, chickens. The Rhode Island Red cocks certainly improved the local breed. Such of their offspring as survived were very good. But even the intra-oval existence of a chick in Karanjia was full of perils. Our hens seemed to have a passion for egg food. There was no more depressing sight than to watch Lady Macbeth lay an enormous egg (suggestive at the very least of triplets) and then turn round and gobble it up before it had even had time to cool. However, we hatched out a large number in course of time, of whom about half used to survive. Some died of heat, others of cold. Some were drowned in their own drinking-water, others trodden on by their parents. One night a gigantic cobra got into the hen-house. It devoured a chick and gave its mother a nasty bite. I attacked the creature with an antique Gond sword I had by my bedside, but it got away. The mother was paralysed for four days and then recovered, celebrating its return to health by pecking one of the other chicks to death.

We introduced pet rabbits and pigeons and gave some of them to the boys in our school hostel. The keeping of pets, so the Educational Department had recommended, was likely to have a mellowing effect on the boys' souls. The boys in Karanjia, however, did not seem to be so susceptible to the influence of simple natural things as Wordsworth would have

expected. Little groups of them would get up at midnight, catch one of the unhappy pets, and cook and eat it in the jungle near the school. A grand time was had by all, and exciting stories of a tiger prowling round and killing the animals were put about, until we discovered the truth, and rescued the remaining animals and brought them back to our own charge.

All this made a great impression and one day we went with Mahatu the Baiga wizard to a neighbouring village and he gave a little talk on the ashram. 'They have a beautiful flower garden,' he said, 'and a leopard goddess, and a bird which goes gobble-gobble and another that says quack-quack and some deer.' 'That's all?' I asked. 'Yes, that's all. But'—after a little thought—'there is a school and hospital.' But you could see what really interested him.

Later, in Sanhrwachhapar, we had a magnificent brown mountain squirrel and a sagacious crane. It is a great satisfaction to tame some jungle creature. You feel you have stepped right outside your normal social orbit—it's like getting a nod from a head waiter at the Cafe Royal. The squirrel lived in a tree outside my house and came in regularly for meals. He would sit on my shoulder and share a cup of tea. The crane was even more friendly, and had a special devotion to Shamrao, whom he followed about. He once went into the dispensary and ate some ammonium nitrate, but he took no harm: it actually seemed to stimulate him. He was very fond of coming and standing beside me while I was typing, and often did a little himself. I rather encouraged him, because I've always wanted to test that bit about six monkeys typing all the works of Shakespeare in a million years.

One of our pet monkeys tempted me to a rather unfortunate encounter with Malinowski, the celebrated anthropologist, during a visit to London. I attended one of his seminars and went up afterwards to speak to him. An incurable levity, always stimulated by lectures, which I can never take seriously, prompted me to tell him a little story.

'I live', I said, 'in a mud house in a tribal village in India, and some time ago I got a pet monkey. This creature was normally very well behaved but one day he developed an appetite for literature and, searching through my shelves, found

a copy of your *Sex and Repression in Savage Society*. He apparently liked the look of it, for he pulled it down from the shelf and began to eat it, whereupon he immediately went mad.'

I looked hopefully at the great man and the disciples that stood around, but there was not a flicker, just a ring of solemn sociological faces, and I made a rapid getaway.

Animals were, as a matter of fact, always dropping in at the Patangarh house for a snack of literature; I recorded one such instance in the *Times Literary Supplement*, which Dr P. G. Wodehouse (taking it rather differently from Dr Malinowski) refers to in his *Over Seventy*. Mr Elwin, he says, 'speaks of a cow which came into his bungalow one day and ate his copy of *Carry On, Jeeves*, selecting it from a shelf which contained, among other works, books by Galsworthy, Jane Austen and T. S. Eliot. Surely rather a striking tribute.'

V

In 1936, after I had begun to be interested in research, we moved twelve miles away to a new village.

At Sanhrwachhapar, which consisted of three hamlets in a great valley with a small river running through it, we had plenty of land, timber and bamboo. We laid out the settlement very carefully, building our own houses on the side of a hill with a sort of studio for myself, high up, where I was able to write in peace. Below was a large field where we held a weekly bazaar and to one side was the school and hostel and, further down towards the river, a very beautiful little plateau where we built the Leper Home. Not far away we made a small village to accommodate members of the staff. We had no chapel in this new centre.

Here we were much more isolated than in Karanjia, though we did make our own road from the main highway which itself was out of action for about half the year. In two of our hamlets there were Gonds and Raj-Gonds and in the third was a community of what are now called Scheduled Caste people, the Meheras. We were nearer the Baigas and there were Agaria settlements all round us.

Here we came into much closer contact with problems of change and exploitation. We were on the fringe of the great forests and became more aware than ever of the great deprivation that the loss of their freedom meant to the people. They love the forest with a passionate devotion. It is to them, 'the forest of joy', 'the forest of sweet desire'. It is the scene of the early romances of their childhood, the arena in which they engage upon their most heroic struggles with nature. The Baigas regard themselves as the true *Pashupati*, the Lords of all wild animals; the magical protection of the forest is their charge; they have derived their material sustenance from it for hundreds of years. The reservation of vast tracts of forests, inevitable as it was, was therefore a very serious blow to the tribesman. He was forbidden to practise his traditional methods of cultivation. He was ordered to remain in one village and not to wander from place to place. When he had cattle he was kept in a state of continual anxiety for fear they should stray over the boundary and render him liable to what were for him heavy fines. If he was a Forest Villager he became liable at any moment to be called to work for the Forest Department. If he lived elsewhere he was forced to obtain a licence for almost every kind of forest produce. At every turn the Forest Laws cut across his life, limiting, frustrating, destroying his self-confidence. During the year 1933-4 there were 27,000 forest offences registered in the Central Provinces and Berar and probably ten times as many unwhipp'd of justice. It is obvious that so great a number of offences would not occur unless the forest regulations ran counter to the fundamental needs and sentiment of the tribesmen. A Forest Officer once said to me: 'Our laws are of such a kind that every villager breaks one forest law every day of his life.' This meant, of course, that the villager in relation to Government perpetually suffered from a bad conscience. He became both timid and obsequious, and it was almost impossible to develop in his mind a sense of citizenship, for he no longer felt at home in his own country.

The Meheras and even the Gonds of this area were rather inclined to litigation and we saw a great deal of the burden which police and court investigations placed upon them, as well as the physical distress and nervous exhaustion of long

journeys to the distant courts, the demoralising contact of lawyers, lawyer's touts and petition-writers, and the bewilderment of dealing with laws they did not understand and which often ran counter to their own traditions. On one occasion we estimated that in a fairly simple registration case the applicant and four witnesses had to travel an aggregate of 3,700 miles before their business was finished.

The people at Sanhrwachhapar were a long way from shops, and commercial exploitation did not press on them very heavily. But in a remote area like this there was a lot of intimidation by the more sophisticated villagers, some of whom impersonated police or revenue officials and took money from the more simple.

I could fill a large book on this subject and I am afraid that part of it would be very up-to-date. Here I will give a few examples of the sort of thing that used to happen.

A merchant bought a couple of hundred rupees' worth of grain from a fairly well-to-do Gond and paid for it with two hundred-rupee notes. The 'notes' were coloured factory labels removed from bales of cloth. The Gond, who could not read, accepted them with pleasure, thinking he had a bargain, and only discovered the fraud when he took the notes to a police station—not to complain but to get change!

One day a loquacious petition-writer told us how he made a handsome living out of the unhappy tribesmen who found their way to the criminal or civil courts. 'I take them away quietly,' he said, 'and sit them down. The authorized charges are, of course, the first item of my bill. But I explain to my clients that they will not get very far with only that. Do they want their petition written with an ordinary pen, or a fountain pen? That is very important. They always choose the fountain pen, and that means a special charge of four annas. Then I have two books with me, a red and a yellow one—they are both law books. The red book is better: if I copy my stuff from that it is eight annas more than if I take it from the yellow book. They always pay. There is another little charge, anything from six to twelve annas, for putting *gur* or sweet-stuff into the writing, and finally a rupee or two to ensure the petition reaching the magistrate at all.'

But perhaps the most impoverishing factor for the lives of both the Gonds and the low-caste Hindus of this neighbourhood came not from outside but from movements for reform.

At that time there was an organization called the Raj-Gond Kshattriya Surajwansi Maha Sabha (to give it its full name) of Seoni and Mandla which had an ambitious programme of cultural change. Its propagandists went far and wide forbidding the Gonds to eat beef or even to yoke the cow to the plough, to abstain from pork and poultry, to avoid alcohol, and to prevent their women from dancing. When we took a party of Gond boys to demonstrate tribal dances at the Tripuri Congress in 1939, the Sabha wrote to Gandhi threatening to perform satyagraha if these children were permitted to give their show.

In Mandla a Gond reformer set up his 'court' near Dindori. At the end of 1936 he began to tour the district. He was accompanied by three or four 'chaprasis'—one of them was a hard-drinking Mussalman adventurer—and carried some large books, Hindu scriptures which he apparently had not studied. The party went from village to village holding meetings. The reformer stated that he had the authority of Government behind him and that failure to obey his orders would be punished by the police. He promulgated what he called the new Gond religion. He pointed out that the old life of the Gonds was altogether bad and caused them to be despised by their Hindu neighbours. Everything, therefore, that the Hindus despised must be abandoned. The great Karma dance, the one surviving instrument of Gond culture in that area, must stop. Men and women must not sing the 'immoral' Dadaria (the beautiful forest-songs) together. Pigs and chickens, the only tax-free domestic animals, must be destroyed—and an already insufficient diet be still further impoverished. The Gonds must become teetotal. Women should be put in purdah. The rules of untouchability must be strictly observed. Children must be married young in Hindu fashion. Cows must be honoured and not yoked to the plough.

Breach of these rules would involve the offenders in serious penalties, which would be enforced by Government. For dancing the Karma, a fine of Rs 50, for drinking liquor a fine of Rs 50, for keeping pigs Rs 25, for yoking cows to the plough Rs 10

and so on. There was a regular tariff. A Sub-Inspector of Police gave his support to the movement and this corpulent futility started a story, which gained wide currency, that Government had recently fined a Gond Rs 50 for shooting a crow; how much more then would it penalize the killing of chickens?

The movement spread rapidly through the district, and hundreds of Gonds donned the sacred thread and paid a four-anna subscription to the reformer. An unspeakable drabness settled down on the reformed villages. A 'Shiv-raj' was established at which the great dancer Natarajan would have shuddered. In the long evenings the men had nothing to do save quarrel with their wives, who were themselves greatly affronted at the restrictions on their liberty. The sick, who had hitherto turned in convalescence to the only tonic available to the poor, a little liquor, were now deprived of this remedy. The 'kick' went out of tribal festivals, the flavour from tribal feasts. 'What are we but animals?' said the Gonds. 'But in this life of two days, we used to have a few things that made us men, our beautiful dances, our songs, our drink. Now these are gone and we have sunk below the animals. Even our food is taken from us, and we have no other amusement than to commit adultery with one another's wives.'

Within two years, however, this reformer had been arrested and imprisoned on a charge of cheating, and many villages returned—though somewhat half-heartedly—to their old customs. But other propagandists are constantly on the move; it is an easy way of making money to improve your fellows; and the beautiful song and dance of the eastern Gond districts is probably doomed to ultimate extinction because of the pathetic notion that to abandon it is to rise in the social scale.

Later, I saw similar movements in Bastar, a few external and imposed, others springing up spontaneously. There had been spasmodic attempts from time to time on the part of Hindu State officials to check beef-eating; occasionally a social worker wandered across the border from Chanda or Jeypore and was scandalized at the freedom, the natural happiness, the lack of clothing of the Bastar tribesmen, and of course the simple and natural love-life of the Muria ghotul.

One year a rumour went through all the tribe of Koraput and spread thence into Bastar that a god had descended on one of the mountains of the Eastern Ghats and commanded all men to give up keeping black poultry and goats, wearing clothes or using umbrellas or blankets with any black in them, and using beads or articles made of aluminium alloy. Soon black goats, cocks, hens, umbrellas, blankets, and beads, were littering the roads, and were bought up for a song by local merchants.

In the latter part of our time at Sanhrwachhappar I found myself on more friendly terms with some of the liberal high officials of the local Government; I was relieved of police surveillance, and appointed an Honorary Magistrate. I still cannot decide if this was wise or not: what influenced me was the consideration that in point of fact I was unable to take part in active politics, being bound by my undertaking to the India Office, while on the other hand the opposition and interference by police, forest and other officials was seriously hindering our work for the tribes. My belief in India's right to independence never, of course, faltered, and my devotion to Gandhi as a person, though I saw little of him, never changed. And, in the long run, I am sure that I have been able to serve India better as a 'tribal man' than I could have done as an amateur politician.

It was Grigson, of whom more later, who introduced me to the few official families who were prepared to put up with me. Chief among them were John and the incomparable Pamela Stent, the judge Ronald Pollock, Pat and Maidie Hemeon, the policeman Ozanne, and C. D. Deshmukh, then serving in Chhattisgarh, who was later to rise to great eminence in the public life of India. Sir Francis Wiley, who was for a time Governor of the Central Provinces, once took me as a sort of adviser on a tour of the Dangs, an interesting tribal area in western India, the only time I have ever travelled in a special train. Sam Wiley was a big enthusiastic Irishman whom I liked immensely. I remember his once saying to me, when he had been telling me of the hostility I had excited by my political views; 'But never be ashamed, Verrier, of anything you have done out of love or enthusiasm.'

VI

We stayed at Sanhrwachhapar for four years and then moved again to our final home at Patangarh, partly on grounds of health, partly because I needed a place from which it would be easy to travel to other parts of tribal India and partly because we just liked Patangarh better.

Patangarh was a charming village on an abrupt hill in the midst of a wide clearing in the mountains. On every side were the hills, piled up on one another, of the Maikal Range. In the foreground was the magnificent symmetry of the Lingo mountain. The sacred Narbada was only half a mile away and we could see its bright waters. A fresh wind was always blowing. Patangarh was at least five degrees cooler than Sanhrwachhapar or Karanjia. Not only was the village beautiful, but its inhabitants were more delightful, more amusing, more friendly than any others. Most of our neighbours were Pardhans, the gay, romantic minstrels of the Gonds. 'Phulmat of the Hills' was a Pardhan.

At Patangarh we opened a dispensary, school, shop, guest-house and our main 'offices', continuing a school, the leper home, a small dispensary, the guest-house, and the bazaar at Sanhrwachhapar for some years. Gradually, however, we brought everything over to Patangarh and established the Leper Home on a flat-topped hill opposite ours.

The establishment of the new centre was rather complicated. The landlord first invited us to come, then gave us a notice to quit, then begged us to stay after all. An odd creature. Then we chose a really lovely site for the ashram round a group of ancient trees, and we started to build. But it turned out that one of the trees was the home of Thakur Deo, and another the haunt of the village Mother-goddess, for an unprecedented series of whirlwinds (which are evil spirits throwing their weight about) swept across our hill, and some of the leading villagers had dreams of the goddess, distracted, her hair dishevelled, tears pouring down her face, rushing wildly to and fro as our buildings were erected.

So we picked the houses up bodily and put them elsewhere, in a site commanding equally lovely views, but without the

trees. Here too we bumped into a ghost, but we felt we had paid our tribute to local sentiment and could hardly be expected to move again.

In order to build at Patangarh we carried most of the houses at Sanhrwachhapar over to the new village. This saved us a lot of expense, for we were able to use all the timber and most of the bamboo walls, though, of course, we had to sacrifice the thatch. As I have said, this is the great advantage of living in mud huts.

I was in central India all through the Second World War.

When I meet someone like Arthur Koestler, I feel rather ashamed of the sheltered life I have lived. And yet it was not altogether easy in our remote villages.

It could in fact be argued that in the village we lived permanently under war conditions. There was a black-out every night, for the people could not afford lanterns. Even more deadly than the Messerschmidt, came a flight of mosquitoes with their load of parasites that killed thousands every year. We always had a rationing system, for the villagers never had enough to eat. For four months in the year the rains set up a great blockade of mud between our villages and the outside world.

A European, even at the seat of war, had a better expectation of life than a Gond; and the diseases that ravaged our villages were every bit as deadly as bombs or gas. Against the ultimate enemies of man, hunger and fear, poverty and death, we were trying to construct a 'Line' of love and sympathy, and it would have been tragic if we had abandoned it because of the madness that had overtaken Europe.

The attitude of the Gonds and Baigas to the war was interesting. An old woman put it very well. 'This,' she said, 'is how God equalizes things. Our sons and daughters die young, of hunger or disease or the attacks of wild beasts. The sons and daughters of the English could grow old in comfort and happiness. But God sends madness upon them, and they destroy each other, and so in the end their great knowledge and their religion is useless and we are all the same.'

Some of the tribesmen, always excited by a quarrel, were anxious to help. A party of Baigas came one day with a bundle

of bows and arrows which they wanted me to forward to the Government to aid in the war. When I told them that modern battles were no longer fought with these weapons they were much concerned. 'But if they use guns, people will really get killed,' they said. Some Gonds brought their old swords. A Baiga magician made what is called a *thua*—an essay in sympathetic magic. He buried a thorn-bush in the ground by a river and placed a heavy stone upon it. The thorn-bush represented Hitler and the hole in the ground his grave; the stone was to prevent him ever rising again. And once when I was going away somewhere, and a story went round that I was going to the war, I was seen off by a crowd of people shouting what they expected me to do to Hitler's sisters and aunts, daughters and other female relations.

I kept Patangarh as headquarters until I went to NEFA, even during the period when I was working in the Department of Anthropology. It was, and still is, a village of great fascination, and I shall always miss it and its people. So will my wife Lila, for she was born there.

I specially miss our main house, to the construction of which I gave a great deal of attention. It was a large mud building with a thatched roof and I loved making it, for it had some special features. It had no outer door, though for the inner rooms I had some old carved Baiga doors that were most ornamental. This was a tribute to our tribal friends—you could not have a house like this in a town—and they could and did come in to see us at any hour of the day or night. Then the entire building was a sort of museum which had things collected from all over India in cases set in the very thick walls. And the building itself was an example of the local tribal art.

The chief surviving art of the Gonds and Pardhans of this part of India was to sculpt on the mud walls of their houses and you can still see many tiny hovels, devoid of every dignity save cleanliness, decorated with charming murals. We decided, therefore, to have all the walls of our own house decorated in this way. It was a big job and took nearly six months, for most of the artists were elderly women who had lots of other things to do, and tribal artists, like artists everywhere, are sensitive

and temperamental and, unlike those elsewhere, had no tradition of doing anything for show or for pay.

One woman, whose work was really admirable, came for two days and then disappeared, for her relations had warned her that one of the local witches was jealous and might enchant her. She did in fact fall ill for a week or two—I think it was an entirely psychological illness—and then we persuaded her to come back and she completed some excellent designs. Another elderly woman came from a distant village; she was the most famous of any worker of this kind, a comfortable kindly person, intent on her work, taking a great pride in it. How we had to guard her! Almost every week a little deputation would arrive from her village; there was a wedding, someone had died, her cow had strayed into the forest, her granddaughter was crying for her: would she please come back. But she was so interested in what she was doing that she would not leave until she had finished. For she had the instincts of a true artist. Before starting a new canvas, as it were, she had an engaging habit of embracing the wall with her arms, as if she loved it and the beauty she was to create; which reminds me of a two-year-old tribal boy who never passed our radio set, which made the music he loved, without kissing it.

Soon the walls were covered with tribal heroes, birds, animals, scorpions, mountains, dancers, and deer with enormously long legs to symbolize their speed. In the dispensary, which formed part of the building, were representations of tribal medicine-men doing their stuff, and in contrast a model of the doctor with his hypodermic. In a bathroom were excellent mud water-girls, three feet high, with pots on their heads and a well at their feet.

This Gond art is characterized by symbolism and by a very simplified method of representation: a bird may be shown by its wings, a dancer by his legs. And the Gonds seem to have little idea of symmetry or straight lines. When I raised this point with one of them, she replied, 'But trees in the forest do not stand up straight, nor do the branches extend equally on either side. The pattern on the wall is like the forest.' And so in many cases it was, and the effect was not displeasing.

The walls of the house did not go up to the roof, and the

artists wanted to put a sort of frieze right round the top. This was great fun. Everybody loved modelling mud animals and birds. A little boy of about twelve arrived one morning and revealed remarkable powers of imagination; he made a splendid elephant with a crown on its head and a howdah on its back, a Gaṇpati which might shock an orthodox iconographer but which was interesting as showing the tribal conception of a Hindu deity, a most elegant camel, a mud motor-car, a tiger with a curling tail, birds so realistic that they looked as if they might fly into the air—and all in the clumsy medium of wet mud mixed with millet chaff.

Around this house and the other houses in which we lived there was a strong atmosphere of affection, not only on our side but also from the people who crowded in at all hours of the day and night in a completely natural and informal way as if the place was their own, as indeed it was. Outside, there was jealousy and even hatred, for some officials and other non-tribals resented the way that anyone could come to us; they felt that we had let civilization down by being too accessible and thus making it more difficult for them to maintain their own barriers of superiority. But this was outside. Inside our walls we could forget everything in the warmth and simplicity of our tribal friends.

We often gave parties, which usually ended in a dance, and what was more important we were given parties in return. In the Mandla villages these were quite elaborate affairs—our hosts would clean their houses and spend all day preparing food, which was generally very tasty. When the time for supper came, a number of people would arrive to escort us. The strongest youth present would hoist me on his back, another would pick up Shamrao, and then, preceded by women singing songs of welcome, we would be carried to our host's house. In NEFA too, the hospitality of the villagers was generally almost overwhelming and I sometimes had to take lunch in half a dozen houses, for none of the leading people of a village liked to be left out. I have had strange dishes on some of these consoling occasions—roasted rats and mice in the Bondo hills; chutneys of red ants among the Murias; large white palm-tree grubs fried in their own fat, a little too rich, from the Marias; a

wonderful pilaff of dog's meat and mountain rice from the Kabui Nagas.

To accept tribal hospitality (provided it is not overdone) is a very good thing. It breaks the one-sided patronage of charity, the condescension of benevolence.

When you reach the point that people want to do things for you and are proud to do so rather than always being on the receiving end, you have made a big step forward. The goodness and kindness of my tribal friends, especially when I was ill, was, both in central India and on the frontier, touching and inspiring. Once in Patangarh I developed a very large septic boil which I attempted to cure by some antibiotic tablets from our dispensary. Unfortunately, these had got mixed up with tablets of Milk of Magnesia which they resembled in size, so they did not do very much good and I got steadily worse, until I was in acute pain and fever. It was the height of the rains, no motor transport was possible and I had to be carried thirty-two miles to a place where I could get a car to take me another ninety miles to the nearest hospital. I shall never forget the cheer and tenderness of the men who carried me in a sort of litter through pouring rain and partly by night. We had to cross flooded rivers into which my bearers plunged up to the neck, raising my litter above their heads to keep me dry. When I ultimately reached the hospital I was told that if I had delayed even a few hours I should have developed generalized blood-poisoning, but an immediate operation put me right. Yet it was my tribal friends who saved me.

I have said little about individual tribal friends. This I have done deliberately, partly because it does not do to have favourites (particularly among children) in a village and partly because in tribal society I found an entirely new kind of relationship with people. In a Muria ghotul, for example, you were friends with everybody: you might have more to do with the Sardar or Kotwar, but that was a matter of convenience: friendliness was universal. In all the tribes, some of the boys and girls stood out from the rest through their beauty, their intelligence or wit, their aptitude for games or dances. Some of the older people were distinguished by their appearance, their knowledge and willingness to share it, or by what they did for me. But

generally speaking, though I have many names in my mind, they were all my friends—and this is the unique and rather wonderful thing about tribal life: you escape from the normal individualism, the possessiveness and jealousies of sophisticated friendships into something broader and more universal.

At the same time, in the Mandla villages at least, there were alliances into which one entered. You took someone as your Mahaprasad (mine was Mahatu the Baiga priest) or your Sakhi (Panda Baba, of whom there is a lot in *Leaves from the Jungle*), had several Jawaras and so on. But Shamrao and I acquired so many of these that they did not disturb the general relationship: a whole village was our Sakhi or Jawara.

This is why I have felt it better (as always searching for some sort of symbol) to write about the Saoras in general rather than the great Chief of Sogeda or the Bondos as a whole rather than the entertaining Miliya.

In our earlier years in the village Shamrao and I had a common purse. We did not take any salary and foolishly made no kind of insurance for the future. We drew what was needed for our expenses and tried to live simply. Anything we received went into the common stock. For example, for five years I received a research grant from Merton College and, later, a grant from the Leverhulme Foundation. Later, in Shillong, I had my official honorarium.

Although friends were very generous, finance was always a problem. I used to go out, generally in the rains, to hold meetings to try to raise money for the work and for a number of years we had an annual meeting in Bombay where people showed a great deal of interest in tribal matters. Without the help of the great Tata Trusts we could not have carried on. J.R.D. and Mrs Tata have always been very good to us and Rustom Choksi, whose friendship is like a rock, and his sister Pipsy Wadia, were most faithful in their support. Later in this book I describe the part that J. P. Patel played in our lives.

When Victor Sassoon joined us he contributed very generously to our funds. But Victor, of course, gave much more than financial support. He is a man who is equally at ease in the company of millionaires, dons or villagers and he was a wonder-

ful success in all the tribal villages he visited and especially in Patangarh where we built a little cottage for him.

One result of my village experiences was that I developed a very strong sense of economy. For example, I still cannot bear to see water being wasted. For many years every drop of water I used had to be carried up a steep hill from a stream or well and now that I live in a world of taps I still do not like to turn them on fully or to allow the precious fluid to run away uselessly.

VII

Short of writing a day-to-day diary, as I did in *Leaves from the Jungle*, it is impossible to give a proper account of the many years we spent in the Mandla villages. There is not a great deal of variety in village life and our days followed a general pattern, which was interrupted from time to time by strange or dramatic incidents. There were the sick who crowded our dispensary. There were the schools or, after we settled in Patangarh the school, for, as Government began opening more schools, we thought it better to concentrate on one. There were the lepers who had to be provided for and cheered up. There was a host of problems and cases that poured in upon us every day. Shamrao dealt with most of the daily practical matters, and I spent a lot of my time writing. There were festivals, marriages and funerals to attend.

I can, therefore, only suggest a few incidents that will illustrate the kind of life we had and I will quote a passage written by my sister after a visit to Patangarh.

For example, the sort of strange thing that often happened is illustrated in the episode of the Mad Jackal.

One night a mad jackal came into the village and ranged round attacking everything it could find. It bit a dozen cattle, several dogs and seven human beings as they lay asleep on their verandas, before it was killed in the first light of dawn. Nobody came near us for at least twelve hours, so by that time there was little to be done by way of cauterizing the wounds. But we did what we could and then came the business of persuading

the human victims to go to Jubbulpore for Pasteur treatment. After an immense amount of argument three of them agreed to go. Three others just did not believe that they were carrying in their bodies the menace of a hideous death, for the rabies from a mad jackal is said to be the worst of all: three of them did in fact die of hydrophobia. This was in spite of the fact that we offered to pay for the expense of the journey and provide them with food rations for a fortnight.

Later, a Gond girl, who had also been attacked in the same way, came to us from a distant village. In order to protect her baby, she had held out her arm and allowed the jackal to savage it until her cries attracted help. But this brave girl too refused to go for treatment, though we offered to take her in our own car.

The real reason for not going to hospital was probably that there is a tribal method of treatment in which everyone believed.

This is based on a fantastic physiological theory. When a man is bitten by a mad dog, the union of the animal saliva and the human blood causes puppies to be generated within his belly. They multiply rapidly and make a nest, from which they go, creeping along the veins, to possess the whole body. Soon there may be scores of them, and within four or five weeks they begin to quarrel and their barking can be clearly heard. At last the noise forces its way into the patient's throat and he himself begins to bark or cry like a dog or jackal. Then his relatives bind him hand and foot, and force emetics down his throat in the hope that he may expel the terrible intruders.

But, long before this, the medicine-man tries to banish the puppies. In Patangarh I was able to see how he did it. He caught a number of longicorn beetles, picked some leaves of the *Nyctanthes arbor-tristis* shrub, ground them up together and made them into pills with a little gur. These he gave one a day to his patients, who very soon began to purge and vomit. Within two or three days, two of the patients began to suffer what they called 'labour pains'—men suffer more acutely than women from these—and soon the tiny creatures appeared. They were, I was told, about the size of red ants, and when young

had nothing but black heads and tails; as they grow older they develop bodies and feet 'like baby rats'. I was never allowed to see these creatures, perhaps because they are only visible to the eye of faith, but everyone was convinced that they were there.

If the puppies are expelled, the prognosis is regarded as favourable; if they do not appear, the patient is said to be in grave danger.

On one of my Saora tours I had a strange and moving experience which, like many of my experiences, had a symbolic value out of all proportion to what actually happened.

I was staying in a village high in the hills, which nobody dared to visit since it was the reputed home of black magic, and in fact some heavy deeds of murder and suicide had been done there. But I found it enchanting, with superb views and charming boys who played games till a late hour every evening in my camp.

One day a little Saora boy, an orphan, starved to a skeleton of food and affection, hardly able to walk, never a smile, came to my camp and attached himself to me. I gave him a bed beside me in my hut, and tried to look after him. His name was Raisinda. He was what the Saoras call *kodajang*, legged like a crane, and was evidently suffering from pneumonia and probably other things as well. He was, in spite of his weakness, a most charming child with beautiful manners. Though he could hardly stand he used to fold up his bedding in the morning and after drinking tea he always wanted to wash the cup himself. He was so ill that he could not lie down for, when he did, he said that he felt as if ants were crawling into his ears. When he came he was making loud harsh noises whenever he breathed: I gave him some antibiotics and he got better. He was a true Saora, for every morning he used to send for palm wine and preferred drinking this to any food we could give him. He also insisted on being provided with the little cheroots called *pikas* to which all the members of his tribe are greatly attached. He was fond of sitting on my lap and, towards the end, when his mind was not very clear, used to call me mother. Almost the last thing he did when he was sitting with me was to fumble at my pocket to put a precious half-smoked

cheroot into safe keeping. He did smile just twice before he died and at the end he passed away very peacefully in his sleep.

Raisinda was infinitely pathetic, forlorn and remote in his boyish struggle to live. One night, while a sorceress in a hut nearby made the darkness uncanny with her conjurations, I dreamt that I was in a great cave, in utter darkness, and that Jammasum (the Saora god of death) had come as a vast Presence, inexorable and grim, to carry off the boy. I was trying frantically to get some light, striking match after match with no result, and then I woke with these words in my mind, 'Love is the true weapon, love is the dress, love is my gold.'

That evening had come the news of the U.N.O. debate on Korea and the threat to use the atom bomb—hence love as the true weapon. I had found that after giving part of my bedding to the boy, I was actually warmer than I had been before—hence love as the dress. And too I had been very worried about money, and my dream rebuked me for this, reminding me of the hidden treasure.

It was a strange thing how this dying child affected my staff and all of us, as well as the other villagers. It was beautiful to see how much tenderness he excited in everybody. I wrote at the time: 'When I ask myself what is the use of a life like his, and why it ever was, coming to the world to be hungry and lonely and then to die without being any use—as one would say—to society, I can see dimly that his suffering, which reflects surely a greater suffering, has hallowed many people and spoken to them.'

There were other symbolic incidents. One day, long ago, a dear old Hindu sadhu came to us in the last stages of sickness and old age. He died bravely, for he was a true sadhu, courteous and detached and unafraid. Nobody would go near him and we laid him out and washed him and finally took him to the pyre in a beautiful little glade in the forest where some of our lepers had been cremated. The red flames leaping up to the rising sun and the peaceful trees and mountains all round made a picture that was in contrast to the horrid reality of disease and misery of the previous night.

Another time a barber, suffering from a very advanced degree of syphilis and entirely alone except for a deformed father,

came for help and we did what we could, but he too died and his body was in a quite shocking condition. Here again, none of the Gonds would touch the corpse, not because he was syphilitic but because he was a barber. So Shamrao and I, with two brave men from the village, who risked excommunication for it, carried his body, which was very light from near-starvation, to the grave.

It was humbling to reflect that, at so little cost to oneself, it was possible to give some comfort, and the effect of the smallest such actions makes one wonder why one ever does anything else. Shamrao once showed his true insight when he immediately recognized the rightness of Blake's saying that, if we would do good, we must do it in minute and individual particulars.

When we were at Karanjia an elderly Pardhan who was suffering from leprosy in a very advanced form came to stay with us. Almost blind and hideously deformed, he could do nothing for himself. He had a young wife named Satula who became for us the symbol of all that was best in married life. She was outstandingly beautiful, graceful and charming, and many young men were anxious that she should divorce her husband and marry again. She could have had almost anyone she wanted and escaped from a life that held nothing but horror and misery. Yet she remained with her old husband, tending him devotedly and giving him her love, until he died. By then she herself had developed the disease and after a few years followed him to the pyre.

Nothing was more distressing than to discover signs of leprosy in young boys and girls. I remember another most beautiful Pardhan girl, only fifteen years old, full of life and happiness, already loved and in love, who one day came and showed us the anaesthetic patches which are early symptoms of the disease.

While I was in Patangarh I had a spell of writing verses, which I published privately in a little book called *28 Poems*. These 'secretions', which were as few as they were unexpected, soon passed and I have not written any poetry since. But what I wrote then put my feeling for the village and its people better than anything I could say today. Among these poems

was one 'On the First Signs of Leprosy Discovered in a Young Tribal Girl':

How has your innocence deserved this fate,
The subtle marks of doom upon your skin
So golden-fair in happy youth's estate
That none would guess the traitor lurks within?

O my poor lovely child, I see already
The lion-mask behind your oval face,
The clawing of the hands, the voice unsteady
That now rings with so musical a grace.

The delicate fingers shaped for a caress,
The careless feet that dance in joyous play,
The laughing lips apt for a lover's kiss
Are doomed to mutilation and decay.

Still the Blind Forester goes through the glade,
Enclosing or condemning as he wills,
And at his touch the bombax white is made,
The ebony grows black upon the hills.

Why did he lay his calloused hand on you,
Of all his planting the most tender shoot,
The young buds springing, leaves wet with love's dew,
And fragile boughs alive with hope of fruit?

Another poem which expressed my feelings at this time was called 'Pity', a word which I used as Blake used it, to mean compassion.

O Pity, walk among our fields,
And touch the drooping ears of corn.
See how the scanty harvest yields
Its pittance from the tortured furrow,
And peasants fear to face the dawn.

And mingle, Pity, with the throng
That crowds the workshop and the mine,
Or in the jail where human wrong
Is punished with a world of sorrow,
Or where the broken-hearted pine.

And, Pity, come to visit homes
In villages remote, unblest,
Where death's sad step so quickly comes.
Regard that child with fever broken,
That mother with a cancered breast.

But first, make man's own spirit wise.
For only by the human hand,
And only through our human eyes,
Can Pity heal our desolation,
And spread compassion through the land.

VIII

My sister Eldyth came to stay with us in Patangarh for a few months just before the Second War. The people loved her and her little house was always crowded with visitors. I find it difficult to write about life in our village, and I will, therefore, give some extracts from letters she wrote at the time.

The Leper Home is close at hand and is a most beautiful place. Banana trees and flowers grow between the small white houses, which are very cosy, especially in the evenings with their little fires. There is the school and dispensary, where Shamrao stands radiating love and hope as he injects one after the other. They come crowding up on their poor swollen feet and as he talks to them and jokes with them, smiles split their distorted faces. The little leper children run to him, five tiny lovely children. A beautiful boy had just developed the disease and had his first injection while his father wept aloud. In such a place there is visible tragedy, but at least they are cared for, they have food and clothing, cows and doves and friends.

For all round us there is that flame of pain, that burns brightly in almost all whom we meet. Disease sunk in them in abysmal hopelessness, cold striking like a piercing arrow with a numbness that a strip of cotton cloth does little to cure; and hunger is a stalking horse with thin arms and legs and wasted bodies. One sees this in the bazaar which gathers all over the ashram hill: the women who are really young look old and wrinkled, almost all are thin. The 'stalls' are tiny little heaps of beans and chillies, a few dried fish, some sweets and tobacco,

some bangles and strips of cloth. But for all that it is a very social occasion and people come from miles around to buy or sell and meet friends.

I long to be able to make you see this village and its poor but loving courteous villagers, who refuse to 'improve', but who lodge in your heart. To show you Verrier and Shamrao, with all that there is to discourage them, ceaselessly returning good for evil and dispensing friendship with both hands.

There were many sick: pneumonia had followed measles. Crowds came to the Dispensary. Shamrao gazing over a selection of patients, all with strange and unknown diseases, cried 'I wish the masses didn't suffer so!' And how difficult to know what to do even when the disease was diagnosed. We did what we could. There was one family where everyone went sick. The father, a magician, went thin as a bone with a terrible cough. The elder boy, deaf and dumb, became jaundiced and faded to a skeleton. The lovely daughter of about fourteen developed heart trouble, the little boys got bad fever and terrible pustulated itch, and the baby, a plump and merry little fellow, with a piece of the backbone of a snake round his neck to protect him from ill, looked like a famine waif, pitiful beyond words. The poor mother was desperate, and went from magician to magician for help, instead of coming to us. We went to them, however, and found them all sitting in a little inner room filled with smoke from the open fire. The skeleton boy was dragged out into the light for us to see, but we could do nothing for him and could only feel glad when he died. The others responded to Shamrao's injections, except for the baby, who, in spite of tinned milk, was too weak to survive. They had been terribly poor and undernourished all their lives.

Another little baby had been ill a long time, indeed ever since he was born he had suffered. His head was so big and his body so small, and he had great brown eyes. When he wasn't with his mother he rode on the hip of his small uncle aged nine, and was often put down for a game of marbles when he would wail in a thin little voice. His father was away and we thought the baby dying, but he got back and the baby laughed for joy and held out his arms and was held by his father till they came to tell us 'The child is dead'. We rushed round to find them all desperately weeping beside the still body of the child. The women weep in the most beautiful way; it is almost like singing, and as they weep they compose the words.

His mother wept, 'My little son, because you were so delicate I held you always on my breast, but now I must lay you all alone on the cold earth. Before you came I was so ugly, but you came and made me a queen. Your throne was between my breasts, but now I must be as I was before.'

They wrapped him in white cloth, and his father, taking him in his arms, led a party down the hillside to the field. Only men go to funerals but they let me follow a little way off. We crouched in the field in silence while the grave was dug with a little cave to one side. The father laid his child in this with most tender care, hovering over him till he felt sure the little body was comfortable, and then he covered his face. They all went to bathe ceremoniously at the well.

One day, startled by the boys' excited cries, we looked up to see, advancing over the plain like prehistoric monsters, twenty great elephants. They were journeying from Sarguja State to Tripuri for the Congress procession. We were all thrilled. Jai Gopal rushed to meet them crying to the mahout of the largest elephant, 'Here you are! Bara Bhai is here. Come along!' Verrier went out and invited them to spend the night in our village, which they did, spending the day eating large quantities of jungle rice laid in the heart of a ball of grass and ten great chapatis and ghee. How our peoples' mouths watered! All that food! People thronged the village and wherever the elephants went the entire Boarding School followed. At sunset the mahouts agreed to take us for a ride. I rode with the women on the Raja's elephant, a great beast nearly twelve feet high, and, with the rest of them laden with boys and villagers, we rode to the river two miles away and the huge creatures stood round drinking. Then we swayed back in the dark, all singing and piping, towering above the little huts. The mahouts were wonderful old men and each elephant had a special name. At dawn they were gone, leaving a treasured memory in the minds of us all. . . .

Anthropological committees are difficult if amusing. One night we had two Pardhans and a Panka to supper. They started off well with a fund of information that was irrelevant but interesting enough to make Verrier want to start a book on the subject. Brought back to the point, the small baby of the chief spokeswoman started to cry and she had to lie flat on the floor till he was soothed. The father, a bit of a wag, with a long piece of cloth wound round his face and head, sat

sideways on a deck-chair commenting on the repast which he ate with relish. 'How much food you eat!' We gave them some coffee at the end to see how they liked it, and their faces were a study.

'After feeding us so well, you give us this bitter stuff to spoil it all,' he cried, but with looks of anguish he drank it.

It is rather terrible to see these people look at food. Whenever we gave the lepers a goat, while it was being cut up they used to gaze with devouring looks upon each piece. It comes from generations of hunger. We asked the boys what they would like for a farewell feast. 'Potatoes and chapatis' they said. That was all they asked.

Little pictures of village life stand out vividly. I remember walking through the village at Sanhrwachhapar on the way that leads down to the well. At the turn on the path you come to a great tree in which were dozens of green pigeons, with wings of mauve and green and feathers of bright yellow and dove-grey. At the top of the hill were two or three houses and they brought out a cot for us to sit down. The view was glorious—golden green forest behind and in front a sweep of plain and hill and close before us a long line of women with full water-pots on their heads coming slowly up the hill. I went on into the courtyard of one of the houses and sat down to watch the women grinding grain and tossing it in a fan to get rid of the chaff. Others were shaking rice and picking the stones from it. Little Indian hens and minute chickens pecked hopefully about, a calf wandered round bewildered, naked babies sprawled in the sun, and an old woman was making mud bins in the sun, patting the mud till it was smooth and round. There was companionship in this leisured simple toil though we could not talk to one another.

I can't write much about the parting from Patangarh; it was too sad. We all wept together and I left them a silent group with tears pouring down their faces. As we turned the corner of the hill there was the cook running hard to give us a last salute.

Just before Eldyth left us—Shamrao and I went with her to England—a young girl of about sixteen came from a distant village to the dispensary. She was singularly attractive but her beautiful young body was a thing of horror, covered with the secondary sores of syphilis. I have seen many such infections

but nothing to compare with this. Eldyth gave her a bed in her room and looked after her, but there was not much we could do. Two days later we left and we took the girl in our car to the nearest hospital for treatment. I had never seen her before: I never saw her again, though I have never forgotten her.

On my return from England three months later, I found that she had been persuaded by some local gentlemen to go before a magistrate and declare that she had been my mistress for two years. The court did not find this very convincing and nothing came of it, but the incident illustrates the very real danger of working in a village if you have to make yourself unpopular by fighting vested interests. Unless you are determined not to be discouraged and are convinced of the paramount necessity of forgiveness which will not allow this kind of thing to embitter you, you will not get very far. But if it is possible to 'live happily indeed, not hating those who hate us; among men who hate us to dwell free from hatred . . . We shall be like the bright gods, feeding on happiness'.

IX

The years in the Gond villages taught me many things though, looking back, I am amazed that I did not learn more quickly. In this story of my life I have deliberately played down its difficulties. 'Being unhappy', said Sydney Smith, 'does no good,' and recalling, or describing, unhappiness does no good either. But memory is merciful to human beings, who cannot bear too much reality, for it censors the discouraging recollections of our darker moments. This does no harm so long as we recognize that they are there in the past and we can learn from them. On balance, my life in the villages was a happy, exciting and rewarding time, but I should give a false impression if I left the reader with the impression that everything was roses, thornless roses, all the way.

Without Shamrao I could have done nothing. If I provided thinking and ideas, he translated them into action.

The struggle from conventional religion into freedom was

very hard and, sensitive to other people's opinion as I was at that time, I dreaded opening my letters when I was in Karanjia. The hatred and jealousy I encountered distressed me and cast a cloud on my happiness. You cannot give yourself to a cause without opening the door to pain, and I have often been desperately worried, unable to sleep at night, over the tribes and their fate: whenever a friend went to jail or was deprived of his forest rights in hunting or fishing, or lost his land, it upset me intensely. The enemies of the tribal people became my enemies, and it was all the worse because so often I was powerless to help.

A lot of people were down on me in those days and, for an ordinary person, I had a rather disproportionate volume of notice in the press, some of it extravagantly kind and some bitterly hostile. At first I was very sensitive to this sort of thing, but gradually I learnt not to worry about it.

But my worst enemies were those of Everyman, inside myself. There was the weakness that comes from disliking people, the distraction that comes from being jealous of them, the resentment that inhibits love, that sick miserable feeling of uncertainty and apprehension that arises from bondage to oneself. And my greatest failure was in my first marriage.

Soon after we settled in Patangarh I married a very beautiful Gond girl, Kosi, who came from a village near Karanjia. She went with me on many of my early tours and gave me a son whom we named Jawaharlal, partly after the Gond Raja, Jawahar Singh, of Sarangarh, a very dear friend of mine, and partly after Jawaharlal Nehru. But he has generally been called Kumar, which is easier to say.

Unhappily, tragically, this marriage did not work out well and after some years I got a divorce. I cannot even now look back on this period of my life without a deep sense of pain and failure; indeed I can hardly bear to write about it.

Later, I married Lila, a Pardhan girl who lived in Patangarh itself and this, though undeserved and almost unexpected, has worked out very well indeed.

We are so accustomed to talking of the Indian villagers as miserable and unhappy that we are apt to forget that many of them, and especially the tribal people, where they are free.

are capable of idealizing their life, as the following Gond folk-song, which also reflects my own experience, shows.

In all the world a village is the place for happiness.
 In every house are ploughs and bullocks,
 And everyone goes farming.
 When the villagers are working in the fields,
 It looks like a festival.
 With the consent of all, the fields are sown;
 They are fenced with thorns to keep the jackals away.
 Slowly, steadily, the rain fills all the tanks
 and wells and hollows,
 While the clouds thunder through the air and
 frighten us out of our wits.
 Some sing Dadaria: some dance the Saila: those
 who are grazing cattle play on the bamboo flute.
 After the ploughing, the fields are thick with mud,
 but the women dance as they sow the rice.
 Friends play, throwing mud at one another.
 Some are smoking; some are chewing *pan*; some who
 are idle sit gaping at the workers; while others sing.
 In all the world a village is the place for happiness.

6

Philanthropology

His anthropology might be called Philanthropology. His great service to science was to lay the foundations and to build the framework of anthropology well and truly on sound scientific principles; his service to humanity was to show that 'the proper study of Mankind' is to discover Man as a human being, whatever the texture of his hair, the colour of his skin or the shape of his skull.

—A. H. Quiggin, *Haddon the Head-hunter*

I

I WAS once introduced at a cocktail party to the wife of a British Colonel as an anthropologist. We sat down together on a sofa but I noticed that the lady squeezed herself into a corner as far away as possible and kept shooting furtive glances at me. Presently, however, after she had strengthened herself with three pink gins, she leant over and in a confidential and slightly guilty whisper asked me, 'Tell me, Dr Elwin, is anthropology very prevalent in your district?'

I am essentially a scholar, a research man. There are few greater pleasures than getting a footnote just right or correcting the items in a bibliography, no dismay more upsetting than to find uncorrected misprints in your final, unalterable, copy. I have had to live far away from libraries, but old friends like B. S. Kesavan, who has transformed the National Library in Calcutta, and gentle, learned Saurin Roy at the National Archives have kept me in touch and made available almost unobtainable books.

Had I not gone to the forest, I might have developed into the typical pedant; even as it is, I take enormous pains over

everything I write and, until I came to Shillong, I used to write or type everything over and over again myself. I took as my exemplar Addison hurrying all the way from his rooms at Magdalen to the Clarendon Press to correct a single letter in proof. I make mistakes, of course, but I try not to, and I check and recheck every item of information: I revised my book on Nagaland no fewer than thirteen times.

I have read a great deal of anthropology in the last thirty years. But unlike the professional anthropologists of today I did not begin with it. My interest in human beings began with literature and my first teachers were Jane Austen and Swift. What a wealth of sociological information and analysis can be found in *Pride and Prejudice* or *Gulliver's Travels*! And later, curiously enough, my studies in theology developed my interest in Man. The science of God led me to the science of human beings. I read a little history, philosophy and psychology: they too prepared the way.

My studies of Hinduism in Poona were also of great benefit. The majority of the tribal people outside Assam have been profoundly influenced by that great religion and it is not possible to understand them without knowing what it is about.

Anthropology is a very big subject, the science of man, man as a whole. We need different kinds of people to study it. We need the scholar trained in pre-history, archaeology, the exact measurement of physical characters, biology, statistics. But we also need some who come from a humanist background and I think it is unfortunate that nowadays what I may call the technical anthropologists look down on the humanist anthropologists, though I must admit that the latter fully return the compliment.

From the very beginning I was attracted by the practical application of anthropology and encouraged by the life of A. C. Haddon of Cambridge, than whom there could not have been a more exact scientist. The extract which I have quoted at the head of this chapter suggests that there is nothing whatever hostile to scientific inquiry in having an intense and affectionate interest in the people one studies, in desiring their progress and welfare and in regarding them as human beings rather than as laboratory specimens.

The essence and art of anthropology is love. Without it, nothing is fertile, nothing is true.

For me anthropology did not mean 'field work': it meant my whole life. My method was to settle down among the people, live with them, share their life as far as an outsider could, and generally do several books together. My Baiga book took me seven years, *The Agaria* ten. I spent ten years on my first collection of folktales and fourteen on the *Folk-Songs of Chhattisgarh*. And they were all going on at the same time. This meant that I did not depend merely on asking questions, but knowledge of the people gradually sank in until it was part of me.

And with knowledge came the desire to help. It was my realization of the psychological and economic impoverishment of the Baigas that led me to question the entire forest policy about shifting cultivation, which I have now examined in many parts of tribal India. It was initially the study of the Agarias that impressed me with the urgent need of encouraging the small cottage industries which were at one time in danger of disappearing altogether. A study of the Santals and Oraons equally impressed on me the importance of encouraging the few existing arts of the people. Some administrators were disturbed at the suspicious and even hostile attitude of tribes like the Bondos and Saoras towards outsiders. It was only when I had studied them very fully that I realized that they were not being merely bloody-minded, but that their apprehension was due to deep-rooted religious and magical ideas. Even the study of folktales and myths, which some people regard as unworthy of the notice of a serious scholar, brought home to me the importance of the fears and anxieties of the people and the need to ensure that we did nothing that would intensify them.

There are, of course, some fields of investigation which can and should be entirely academic, but in India at the present time, where, as a result of the great Five-Year Plans, the tribal people are being very rapidly changed and merged into ordinary society, I believe that we should put every possible anthropologist and sociologist into the work of guiding development and training its agents. This need not mean any lowering of the standards of research, still less a bias towards

any particular theory. For it is the glory of science to direct the radiance of truth into the dark places of human life and transform them.

II

One of the things that roused great suspicion among the pandits was that I came to anthropology through poetry. I still cannot see what was wrong with this. The chief problem of the student of man is to find his way underneath the surface; he has to 'dig' people. Poetry is the revealer, the unveiler; by heightening a man's own sensitivity, by opening to him the treasures of the imagination, it increases his powers of sympathy and understanding. And when his people are (as they were in the Maikal Hills) themselves poets by temperament, there is a link between him and them; they talk the same language, love the same things.

Ever since I left Oxford poetry has been my inseparable companion. It has brought me 'in hours of weariness sensations sweet'; comforted and restored me in stormy weather; filled times of loneliness and illuminated all that has been dull and dark. Like Keats, I cannot exist without Eternal Poetry to fill the day.

Now, feeling as I did, when I first went to live in the tribal hills of India, with my Wordsworth, my T. S. Eliot, my Blake and Shakespeare burning like torches in my little mud house, it was natural that I should look about me for poetry. And I soon found it, for among these gentle and romantic tribal people, poetry jumps out at you. It is there everywhere, in their eyes, on their lips, even in some of their actions. And so now poetry became, from something external to be admired, part of me, a personal possession, and whatever I have done in the name of poetry comes from the work I have done with my tribal poet-friends.

I found the people talking poetry. An old woman speaks of fire as a flower blossoming on a dry tree, of an umbrella as a peacock with one leg. Children playing round the fire at night ask each other riddles which are sometimes real poems. Chillies

are red and green birds sitting on a bush; a lamp is a little sparrow that scatters its feathers about the house. A man, speaking of his pregnant wife, says to me, 'She must be treated as a flower, or the light may fade from her blossom.' Young lovers sing poems to each other across the fields, arranging an elopement in verse, discussing their love in poetic symbols. The grain in the fields is beautified: the smallest of the millets is sweet as a lotus; tiny as it is, when it is cooked with milk it swaggers about. The forest herbs are personified; one has a shaven head, another long tresses hanging to the ground, a third parts her hair. The poorest cot has legs of gold and a frame of jewels when a lovely girl is sleeping on it.

My very first 'tribal' book was a joint venture by Shamrao and myself, called *Songs of the Forest*, which was published by Allen & Unwin with a kindly foreword by Sir Francis Young-husband. Although once I have finished a book I can rarely look at it again, I still read this one as well as my other translations with genuine pleasure, for many of the songs are beautiful by any standard. In the Mandla hills we had the immense advantage of talking a dialect of Hindi called Chhattisgarhi which proved very easy to learn and which we still talk at home. This meant that there was immediate and familiar contact with the people all the time.

Later, I published two other collections of folk-songs, one, (jointly with Shamrao)—*Folk-Songs of the Maikal Hills* in 1944, and another, *Folk-Songs of Chhattisgarh* two years later. Both were substantial volumes, one of 439 pages, the other of 527. I dedicated the first to W. G. Archer, and he wrote a long Comment for the second, which I regard as the finest statement about tribal poetry that has yet been made.

My method of translation was to be very simple and to be careful not to add any new images to the original. Arthur Waley says of his own method, 'Above all, considering images to be the soul of poetry, I have avoided either adding images of my own or suppressing those of the original.' A good example of the danger of breaking this rule may be seen in the work of Dryden, whose translations are really remarkable original poems suggested by classic models. In his famous stanza on Fortune occur the lines:

I can enjoy her while she's kind;
But when she dances in the wind,
And shakes her wings and will not stay,
I puff the prostitute away.

This is supposed to be a translation of the twenty-ninth Ode of the Third Book of Horace. But the excellent line which was so much admired by Thackeray—'I puff the prostitute away'—is represented in the original simply by the words *resigno quae dedit*. Thus a new image is added to the poem, for which there is no warrant. Caution in this matter is all the more important when we consider the essential place that symbolism holds in village poetry.

I followed as well as I could the example of Arthur Waley and worked on the principles laid down by W. G. Archer, that is to say, to avoid rhyme and make no attempt to reproduce the form of the original. I tried to represent the meaning as literally as possible, within the limits of the demands of poetry, and was scrupulous in introducing no new image.

Bill Archer, in his book on Uraon folk-poetry, *The Dove and the Leopard*, makes many comparisons with my translations of Baiga, Pardhan and Gond poems. He considers that the poetry of these different tribes is of the same general type but differs remarkably in technique. There is in Uraon poetry no two-lined verse such as is common among the Baigas, nor do we find the custom (which was also common in Hebrew poetry) of rhyming thought, in which one line parallels the next. If we define a love-poem as the expression of rapture, Baiga poems are as obviously love-songs as Uraon poems are not. 'It is the necessity of sex rather than the charm of love which dominates Uraon songs.'

It is a very great pity, and I entirely accept any criticisms that may be made of me on this account, that we have not been able to publish the originals of these poems. It would have made the books far too unwieldy had we done so immediately, but we had an enormous pile of papers containing the originals in Devanagari script, which Shamrao was preparing for the printer. Unfortunately, in one of our absences on tour a great storm destroyed many of our things and these precious originals were among them. The songs were not of any particular

linguistic value, for none of them were translated from the obscure tribal languages but, at the same time, they would have been of artistic and literary interest and as a result of their disappearance I cannot claim too much for the volumes of translations, although they contain a great deal of commentary which is of some sociological value.

III

My first large work was *The Baiga* which John Murray published with the help of a subsidy from the Dorabji Tata Trust. Previously Dr and Mrs C. G. Seligman, to whom I look back as my real inspiration in this field, had helped me to publish an article on Baiga dreams in the *British Journal of Medical Psychology* and I later did a second article for the same journal on the Vagina Dentata.

It was rather thrilling writing *The Baiga* and it had a remarkably good press, indeed the praise it received now seems to me somewhat extravagant. But like all the work we did at that time there was a certain atmosphere of enthusiasm and excitement which was, I think, infectious.

To be among the Baigas was like living in the middle of a fairy story. Of all the tribes I know they are the most possessed by their mythology. And these myths were not just interesting tales tacked on to the fringe of their life. They were alive; every one of them was continually being put into action. When the Baiga was summoned to control a man-eating tiger, he faced this dangerous task with the more courage because he knew that the duty had been his from the beginning. When he performed magic on behalf of the Gond farmers, he recited the myth of the creation of the world and reminded his hearers of the unique share his tribe had in it. The myth breathed life into ancient custom; it made the unintelligible real; it turned the ancient heroes into contemporaries.

The founder of the tribe and its great hero was Nanga Baiga. Born on the Hill of Elephants, from the womb of Mother Earth, beneath a clump of bamboos, and nursed by the divine Bamboo Girl who gave him a golden axe to play with, Nanga

Baiga appeared just when he was wanted. The Creator had made the world, spreading it on the face of the primeval ocean like an enormous, flat chapati; he had called the wind to harden its surface, but the wind is blind (that is why it is always knocking things over and banging against people) and did not finish the work. He called Bhimsen to put the mountains in place, but Bhimsen was always drunk and was so heavy that he kept on putting his foot through the thin surface. Nothing could make the earth firm and steady. It wobbled. It was like a broken spider's web.

So the Creator sent for Nanga Baiga. When he came and put his foot on the edge, the world tipped up—as they say the U.S.A. tipped up when Bernard Shaw landed in New York. But Nanga Baiga soon put things right. He got four great nails and drove them into the four corners of the earth and after that it was firm and steady. Then Nanga Baiga helped in the creation of the rest of mankind; it was through him that seed came to the world; he instituted magic; organized the social and economic life of man; established control over the wild animals. He was the first real man.

No wonder that the Baiga, tracing his descent from such distinguished ancestry, has an air about him. A king (or perhaps I should say an archbishop) is always peeping through his loop'd and window'd raggedness. And still today he is *the* magician and medicine-man, the classic type, who acts as intermediary between the other tribes and their gods. He is sent for by the Gonds to charm fertility into their reluctant seed; he is consulted even by Brahmins in time of sickness; it is believed that he can divert hail from a treasured field; he can detect with his divining-rod a stray bullock or a stolen goat far more efficiently than the police.

This tradition and pride of the Baigas brought them into conflict with Government in two ways. The first was that since they had been born from the womb of Mother Earth, they believed that it was a very wrong thing for them to lacerate her breast with the plough. The second was that, since they were the true Pashupati, lords of animals, they considered that they should have the freedom of the forest for their hunting. Nothing shows more clearly the evils of an administration

ignorant of tribal mythology and indifferent to its custom than the way the old Government dealt with the Baigas on these two points.

From 1867 to the end of the century the unfortunate Baigas were pursued by zealous forest officers, determined to make them stop their axe-and-hoe cultivation and take to the plough. At the same time much of their hunting was stopped and some of them were even forced to make heaps of their precious bows and arrows and burn them.

Shifting-cultivation is a bad thing: unfortunately it is often the only possible thing. The Baigas used to cut down a track of forest, set fire to the wood when dry, and sow their seeds in the ashes. After repeating this for three years, they would move on to another patch of forest. Obviously, even where a tribe had a religious passion for this type of cultivation, it could not be permitted on a large scale and for ever. But where only a few tribesmen practised it—and the Baigas were a very small tribe—and where a regular rotation of at least twenty years was observed, the harm it did to the forest was greatly exaggerated. The Baigas have practised this form of cultivation for centuries in Mandla and Balaghat, yet nowhere is there better forest today.

But the Baigas were forced to the plough; many were reduced to poverty, for they hated the tabooed implement, and all suffered psychological disturbance deep in their souls. They have today sunk into the position of impoverished and inferior cultivators. Robbed of their bows and arrows, they are no longer lords of the forest, the great shikaris of former times. They have lost much of what used to make life so rich and enjoyable.

I had many Baiga friends and they were all pledged to inform me if anything interesting happened. So one day there would come news that someone thirty miles away had died, and we would be off within the hour to watch the funeral. Another day there would be a marriage; another we would have to climb a tall hill to see a Honey Festival, in honour of the bees, that occurs only once in nine years. Yet again the Baigas would come to my own village and protect it with a magic wall by driving nails along the boundaries.

It was in the very remote Bohi that I watched the strange and thrilling ceremonies designed to close the jaws of the man-eater and to frustrate the witch who had sent him. It was a desperately serious business; seven of the most powerful magicians came to do battle with the forces of evil. The Tiger Spirit came upon one of the spectators; he was transformed into a tiger and began to behave like one: there was an exciting tiger hunt; and in the end nails were driven into rocks and trees.

The next morning, I was standing in the forest when a large pig lumbered up to me with a leaf in its mouth which it dropped at my feet. I was rather moved by this—sort of Francis among the birds touch, I thought—and then forgot all about it. But no sooner had I returned home than I went down with a violent attack of fever. The local magicians waited on me, and soon diagnosed the cause—the witch of Bohi, annoyed at my presence in the village, had put magic in a leaf and sent it to me by her pig. They immediately took the necessary measures, and I recovered.

The Baigas are very fond of pigs. One day a man came to me complaining that his wife had run away with someone else. 'That,' he said, 'I could have borne; but they took away my favourite pig.' A pleasant picture—the happy couple fleeing through the moonlit forest glades, and on the lover's shoulder is a pole bearing a protesting, squealing pig.

Once when we were driving through the forest beyond Kapildara we met a large tiger on the road. It was an open car and personally I was considerably alarmed. But an old Baiga sitting by me did not turn a hair; he began to mutter his charms and after a minute or two the tiger turned and went away quietly into the jungle. 'That is nothing,' the Baiga told me. 'There was a man called Dugru who used to be visited by three or four tigers at a time. They would lick his hands and feet and stroke him with their paws. Sometimes he got tired of them and would tell them to go away, and they always obeyed him.'

And he told another story of how once the Baigas, angry at some restriction of their forest rights, had warned all the tigers in their area that the Governor was coming for a hunt, and as a result His Excellency did not get a single animal!

It is very important that the anthropologist should come down from his perch and, as far as he possibly can, become what G. K. Chesterton once called 'the invisible man'. This was in one of the Father Brown detective stories where the murderer was the postman. All the witnesses declared that nobody had visited the house where the deed was done, but they forgot the postman who fitted into the picture so completely that he didn't count. It is not easy to reach this standard but I was always trying to, and one of the greatest compliments an ethnographer could be paid was once given me by a Baiga. I had visited his village and been received with great friendliness but none of the fuss and deference which the touring officer generally receives. One of my company was annoyed at this and said to the villagers: 'Here is a sahib: he must be someone important. Why don't you make proper arrangements for his reception?' The Baiga laughed at this. 'We know it's only Bara Bhai'—the usual name for me, by which I was distinguished from Shamrao, the Chhota Bhai: in fact we were often known by a portmanteau name, Bara Bhai-Chhota Bhai, Big Brother-Little Brother. 'He is such an ordinary man that when we see him coming we say, "Oh, it's only Bara Bhai, there's no need to bother!"'

IV

For my next book I turned to the Agarias, a small group of blacksmiths and iron-smelters, who are scattered all over the Mandla and Bilaspur Districts with cadet branches right across central India to Bihar. In this study I wanted to discipline myself and concentrated mainly on the techniques of craftsmanship with the mythology that vitalized them. I found it interesting enough and I felt it was good for me, but the Agarias are a dull people compared to the Baigas. Preparation of this book involved a great deal of travelling about and I kept on finding little groups of them in unexpected places.

Fifteen years later these early studies in iron resulted in my being invited to write *The Story of Tata Steel* for the jubilee celebrations of the Tata Iron and Steel Company, the only

properly paid literary work I have ever done (they gave me ten thousand rupees for it) and the book was most handsomely produced.

All the time that I was working on these and other books I was collecting stories. I put some hundred and fifty of them in a book *Folk-Tales of Mahakoshal*, which was the first volume of my Specimens of the Oral Literature of Middle India. This included a fairly complete bibliography of the Indian folktale in English and was very fully edited with notes and comparative material. The second volume in this field was my *Myths of Middle India* which were not so good as stories, though of considerable significance for our knowledge of how tribal myths developed out of, and sometimes parallel to, the ancient Hindu traditions. Probably the most important section of this book was one, which some of my readers regarded as rather coarse, on the origin of the different parts of the human body and its natural functions. I was very pleased when the *American Anthropologist* described it as 'a landmark in the exploration of the intellectual history of mankind'.

Long afterwards I made two selections of folk-stories from my larger collections. The first was *Stories from India* in four small volumes published by the Oxford University Press; the other was called *When the World was Young*, and was a National Book Trust publication. The best thing about them was the illustrations. The gracious and beautiful Leela Shivesh-warkar did the first, the brilliant and delightful Amina Jayal the second.

Another book, the preparation of which gave me great pleasure, was my *Tribal Art of Middle India*, but unfortunately I was so excited about it that I published it too soon. Had I waited another year or two I could have made it much better, for I discovered many new things as time went by and made, for example, a superb collection of wood-carvings from the Santal Parganas. I also found many Jadupatua scrolls, tribal comic strips as I call them, which tell the ancient stories of the Santals in pictures. Even so this book revealed a good many unexpected treasures and stimulated designers elsewhere.

At this time I also wrote two novels, both of which were published by Murray. The first, *Phulmat of the Hills*, was the

love-story of a Pardhan girl whose beauty was finally destroyed by leprosy. The second, *A Cloud that's Dragonish*, was a tribal crime-story in which the detectives were Gonds and Baigas. Both these books got very good notices in England, though they were little read in India, but they have been out of print for over twenty years and have not been republished. Later, I wrote another novel, *Traitor's Gain*, which turned on the iniquitous exploitation of the tribal people, but I was unable to find a publisher. Later still, I wrote two thrillers which suffered the same fate. One was about a master criminal in India, which Mr Gollancz nearly accepted. The second was based on a visit to French West Africa that Victor Sassoon and I made in 1949. The failure of these books depressed me a little for, while I was writing them, I saw myself as a best-seller and all my financial problems solved.

Yet another novel, which Victor liked very much, though I never dared submit it to a more exacting critic, was about a girl—it really was—who became a prostitute for twenty-four hours and sold her favours to four different men, one of whom gave her syphilis. She had it very badly, it affected her brain and she was sent to an asylum. She escaped and devoted herself to tracking down her former lovers and, as she did not know which of them was responsible for her disease, murdered them all one by one. The series of crimes was naturally baffling to the police, for there was no apparent motive for them and nothing to link them together.

The discovery of penicillin has taken most of the kick out of stories about syphilis, and in any case I have now lost the manuscript.

The Baiga brought me many new friends, chief of whom was W. G. (Bill) Archer. The popular notion in India about the Indian Civil Service, that its members were stiff and arrogant, is not altogether correct. It also included some of the most friendly, sensitive and intelligent people you could meet anywhere, people like Bill himself or N. R. Pillai, V. Viswanathan (now Home Secretary), J. H. Hutton, the present Governor of Assam, and others whom I describe elsewhere in this book.

Shortly after the *The Baiga* was published, Bill wrote inviting me to Bihar. He was then Census Superintendent for the

Province and Shamrao and I went to stay with him and had the opportunity of touring in many Uraon, Munda, Ho and Asur villages. Later, when Bill was Deputy Commissioner of the Santal Parganas, I toured widely with him there and, later still, made a number of visits to the Santal and Uraon villages. These experiences enriched my book on the Murias and my first book on tribal art.

On this first visit I had the opportunity of meeting Sarat Chandra Roy, the veteran philanthropologist who not only wrote a whole series of books on the Bihar tribes but fought valiantly for the people both in the courts and outside. After his death Bill Archer and I, with the help of his son Romesh, took over the journal *Man in India*, which we edited for a number of years.

V

Lying to the south of what was then the Central Provinces was the State of Bastar, a territory the size of Belgium. The great plain of Chhattisgarh stretches down past Raipur and Dhamtari in hot and dusty monotony till it spends itself against the hills of Kanker. Thenceforward the journey is a never-failing delight; as the traveller moves towards the Bastar plateau the countryside breaks into song about him; he is greeted by hardy smiling woodmen singing at their work; the skyline is broken by fantastic piles of rock; all around is the evergreen sal forest. Presently he sees looming up before him a row of sharply-rising hills, the sentinels that stand on guard before the country of the Murias, and the long steep ascent of the Keskul Ghat has to be essayed. From the summit there is a magnificent view of the great sea of hill and forest below.

I was first attracted to Bastar by the late Sir W. V. Grigson, known to his friends as Frittles, one of the greatest men who has concerned himself with tribal problems in India, a witty, charming and faithful friend. From quite early days he had not allowed his attitude to me to be influenced by police reports: in the first place, I too had been to Oxford, and in the second, I shared his enthusiasm for all things tribal. He was

Administrator of Bastar from 1927 to 1931 and wrote a book about it called *The Maria Gonds of Bastar*. I first read this book in Frittles' own house when I was laid up with fever and was so excited by it that my temperature rose appreciably. It was, however, a long time before I had the opportunity or money to make any serious study of the Bastar tribes. In the earlier years the local Administrator was not at all favourable to my paying a visit to the State for fear that I would start a Congress rebellion, but ultimately he was persuaded to allow Shamrao and myself to make a short visit, when we drove about the State and saw as much as we could from the roadside.

Later, I took the late Mrs Marguerite Milward the sculptress there—she has described her visit in her book *Artist in Tribal India*.

Marguerite had studied in Paris under Bourdelle and she worked with him for many years. Her first visit abroad was in his company to Ceylon where she began her studies in the sculpture of primitive peoples, to which she devoted the better part of her life. She visited Tibet, Burma, Java, north-west Africa, French Indo-China as well as India for this purpose and used sometimes to lecture on anthropology. One of her sayings was that 'art unites where politics divide'. The Indian Government bought a number of her heads and they may still be seen in the Indian Museum in Calcutta. One beautiful head, however, of a Gond girl, which she made during her visit to us and which formerly stood in the window of India House in London, she gave to me shortly before her death in her eightieth year.

Marguerite, who was a most engaging person but of enormous size, along with her cases of cement and clay, was altogether too much for our old car and as we were passing through Kanker everything fell out through the bottom and we had to send to Jagdalpur to be rescued.

Finally, in May 1940, I went to Bastar with the idea of doing something really serious, and I was actually given an official appointment, that of Census Officer, which paid a monthly salary of a hundred rupees. Even at that time I was hardly educated in the ways of the world and was not aware that both one's travelling allowance and the respect in which one was

held in official India depended almost entirely on one's pay. When I got to Bastar, however, Norval Mitchell, a very good type, who had then taken charge and gave me all possible support, changed this extraordinary arrangement and paid me a lump sum of 1,500 rupees for my work on the Census. Of course, all I wanted was some kind of official status without which in those days it was difficult to do any work in an Indian State. Later we again changed the arrangement and I became Hon. Ethnographer to Bastar. A local paper, boggling at the word 'ethnographer', announced that I had been appointed Hon. Stenographer.

My idea was to follow my usual technique and settle down among the people. We built a lovely little house of stone (which cost only 200 rupees) opposite the stupendous and beautiful Falls of Chitrakot and made small huts, quite habitable, at 40 rupees each, in two Muria villages. Our main centre continued to be at Patangarh, where Shamrao held the fort while I was away.

At that time Bastar was entirely delightful. The tribal people were poor but they were free and happy. There was a quality of enthusiasm and zest in their lives. Their dances were amongst some of the finest in India and they had not been corrupted by Puritan workers into a belief that their beautiful bodies were something to be ashamed of.

I travelled all over the State and collected a lot of notes and photographs of the Hill Marias of the Abujhmar whom we visited on elephants, the Koyas, Bhatras, Dorlas and others. But my main interest was in two of the tribes—the Bison-Horn Marias of the south and the Murias of the north. I did a book on the Marias called *Maria Murder and Suicide*, trying to discover what it was that drove these simple people to homicide, and I also studied the conditions in the Jagdalpur jail which I tried to get improved.

Of all the tribes I have studied, I found the Marias the most attractive and field-work among them the most comfortable and pleasant. The Bison-Horn Maria area was even in 1941 accessible in the open season by car, and every village had a well-built rest-house for visitors. The people were friendly, the climate was excellent, and I enjoyed my years there enormously.

It was in Bastar that I first began to use the gramophone as a means of breaking down barriers and creating a friendly atmosphere. I got some excellent Hindi comic records and also used to play a little Mozart and Beethoven which, I am sorry to say, did not go down very well.

And then, in the middle of one of my tours, a young man suddenly arrived in camp with a very large box, which had been sent up from Jagdalpur by the police. When we opened it we found it full of superb mechanical toys sent by two friends in Bombay. These toys must have given more pleasure over a wider area than any collection of toys that was ever made. Some of them lasted for eight years and I took one or two, their well-worn mechanisms still ticking over, with me on expeditions in N.E.F.A. They were certainly a great help in making contact with the Marias.

Yet normally, anything unusual was dangerous. The Marias were very suspicious, for example, of the Census. They recalled that after the 1931 Census many tigers had appeared in the forest. It is always risky to count and measure, for 'the sin of numbering the people' may reduce fertility. So after the 1941 Census, in most villages, the house number-boards were carried out and sacrifices of pigs were made before them.

The Marias were a tough and rather formidable tribe, with a very high incidence of homicide, six times that of the neighbouring Central Provinces. The jail at Jagdalpur was always crowded with Marias serving sentences for murder. The administration was worried about this, and I offered to try and discover why it was. I was given the freedom of the Record Room and here, after turning over a great number of dusty files, I found a hundred that gave me the sort of information I wanted. I also wanted suicide records, but these were not so easy to come by, for they were not kept at headquarters but in the local police-stations. But the Superintendent of Police called in all the suicide files, and I was able to find fifty about the Marias.

Having collected the records I mapped out the villages where anything had happened and visited as many as I could. I talked to the relatives of the murderers and of their victims, got the opinions of village elders, studied the attitude of the other

villagers, and frequently met the actual individuals who had served their term (for the death sentence was very rarely imposed) and had now returned home.

This was an extraordinarily interesting job. In Aranpur I stood beside the still warm ashes of the ritually-cremated clothes of Barse Chewa, who had recently been hanged in jail. At Khutepal, I watched Oyami's children playing on the very floor once stained by the blood of his murdered wife. In Rewali I was visited by a ferocious-looking youth, who had twice stood trial for his life and had twice preserved it.

Here too I talked with another youth who, in a fit of jealousy, had killed his wife and now—not unnaturally—found it hard to get another. In Doriras I saw the grave of the murdered Boti which had been desecrated by the Ghasias for the sake of the purse of money which had been buried to help the ghost on his journey to the other world. In the same village I visited the home of Kawasi Borga, then serving a life-sentence, and talked to his fine sons and his sad pathetic wife.

An analysis of the reasons and motives for these murders was revealing. Quarrels over property accounted for 15 per cent; family quarrels for 16 per cent; jealousy, infidelity, sex motives in general, for 17 per cent. Nineteen per cent were more or less trivial crimes committed when drunk. Only five per cent were caused by the suspicion or accusation of witchcraft and sorcery. There were six murders committed for revenge, and nine out of resentment at abuse or 'word-magic'. This last is an important and curious motive: to use the wrong kind of words may be a very risky thing, being not only insulting to the feelings but dangerous (magically) to the person.

One of the things which was a revelation, not only to me, but also (I have been told) to more than one Sessions Judge, was the discovery of the part played by fatigue in promoting acts of violence. There can be a sort of fatigue-intoxication, not unlike that caused at a certain stage by alcohol. Fatigue can cause dejection and irritability, worry, desperation and a desire to escape from a situation which seems intolerable. And the Marias, like other peasants, often get very tired. They return home in the evening; supper is not ready, the child is crying,

and in a flash there is a blow and a dearly-loved wife is dead and a home is ruined.

I spent many hours in the Jagdalpur jail, talking to Maria prisoners, and what struck me most was the remarkable innocence of many of them. They felt that an inexplicable destiny had overtaken them. They did not feel like criminals; in many cases their crimes were no more than tragic accidents. They were a very sad company.

I first became interested in prisons in the Satyagraha days when I made emphatic protest about the treatment of political prisoners. Then, later, my experiences with the police in Mandla gave me almost a horror of their methods and of the whole idea of punishment and retribution in the treatment of crime.

The descent of the police on a tribal village is a dreadful thing. For days the entire community is kept from its work and often has difficulty even in getting anything to eat. How often we watched it happen! The Sub-Inspector arrived and made his camp in the best house in the village. He and his constables had to be provided free of charge with food and drink of a kind that the people themselves could only afford at great festivals. Third-degree methods were often used before and, I am sorry to say, even after Independence to obtain evidence. No one felt safe. For days the shy and timid tribal people were distracted by anxiety. Large sums of money secretly changed hands and when the final arrest was made it was a heart-rending sight to watch the prisoner in his handcuffs escorted to the boundary of the village by a crowd of weeping relations.

I had the opportunity of visiting a number of prisons and seeing how the tribal people fared, and in Bastar my interest developed greatly. Dramatic incidents still further impressed on me the importance of revising our methods of investigation as well as our treatment of criminals. A girl in a village near Sanhrwachhapar was accused of poisoning her husband. The accepted routine was followed and though the villagers were convinced, as I was, that she was innocent—and villagers are seldom wrong about this sort of thing—she was arrested and sent to jail where she was capitally convicted. We did not think that there was any real danger of her being hanged, but one day I received a telegram from Fritties Grigson telling me that

if nothing was done she would be hanged within a very short time. I have never driven a car so fast in my life as when I made the three-hundred-mile journey up to Pachmarhi, where the Government was having its summer session, in the hope of obtaining a reprieve. When I arrived I was told that it was too late. But I persevered and in the end succeeded in saving the girl's life, and she was reprieved to the terrible mercy of life-imprisonment.

On one of my visits to jail, I saw, and can still see, two young Gonds in handcuffs for murdering a Pathan moneylender who had driven them to the despair of hopeless poverty. With great eyes filled with bewilderment and fear, like frightened and beautiful deer of the forest, the two little Gonds were surrounded by enormous constables.

The tribesmen suffer out of all proportion in jail. 'If a Maria is sentenced to a long term of imprisonment,' says Grigson, 'he will beg to be hanged rather than be confined within walls: and few of the wilder Bison-horn Marias survive long imprisonment.' The grim forbidding walls, the stone beds, the rule of silence, the unfamiliar food and language, the attitude of suppliant and obsequious deference before officials, the absence of recreations, the lack of religious comfort, the denial of human companionship, the appalling monotony oppress and crush them.

This is particularly true of the frontier areas. The NEFA tribesman, who is taken down from the mountains and sent to prison in the plains, suffers, in addition to the inevitable sense of isolation, the affront to human dignity, the loneliness and despair that afflict all prisoners, special deprivations. The heat of the plains is almost unbearable to a hillman. It is probable that no one knows his language. He himself may only have a few words of Hindi or Assamese. In some cases tribal prisoners have been in jail for years without hearing a word of their families and they are too far away from them for visits.

Some of us have been very keen to have a special jail for our tribal people, which will be a place of healing and restoration and where the whole idea of punishment and revenge will be banished. It is, however, extraordinary how even today many officials think in very different terms. 'They put on weight while

they are with us,' a Jail Superintendent told me. 'They do not feel things as we do,' said another, and many people have urged that even in the worst jail a tribal convict has a better time than at home.

There was a theory about the threshold of pain which was supposed to be higher among 'savages' than the civilized. In other words, if you pricked a bishop and a Maria at the same moment, it would be the bishop who jumped first. He was more delicate: it would hurt him more. I don't believe a word of it.

I have always felt ashamed that I did not manage to go to jail as a Satyagrahi but, as I have explained earlier, the British Government would not have given me this privilege: they would simply have deported me. When I was in Jagdalpur I did discuss with the Administrator whether I could somehow go as an ordinary prisoner into the prison there, but he thought it would be difficult to ensure that the local magistrate would not give me a sentence rather too long for scientific purposes.

VI

The Marias

The most memorable thing about the Marias is their superb marriage-dance when the men, wearing great headdresses of bison-horns and carrying their long drums, move in a large circle, while a row of women thread their way among them. It is probably the finest dance in tribal India.

One day a young Maria called Alami Mata returned home from the forest to find that the splendid horns and feathers of his hereditary dance outfit had been stolen. This was something more than the loss of a precious possession. In a neighbouring village was a beautiful girl, unmarried and growing to love him; Alami was wooing her in the dance, and indeed in his magnificent headdress, shaking his horns and prancing before his love like a young bison, he must have been hard to resist. But now, like Samson shorn of his hair, there was no strength in him; how could he go to meet his girl in the mean and undistinguished attire that was left to him?

As he stood brooding on his tragedy, his father came in and abused him roughly for wasting time. It was too much for the boy; life without music, love or rhythm was not worth living, and he went out and hanged himself.

This incident illustrates the attachment of the Marias to their great dance and to the finery which adorns it. The headdress of bison-horns is the chief treasure of a Maria home. It is kept with the utmost care, dismantled, in closed bamboo baskets, and it takes nearly an hour to assemble.

This headdress, and the dance, is the sole expression of the Marias' aesthetic sensibility. They do not carve, or paint, or model images on their walls; they do not, like their neighbours, the Murias, make attractive combs and tobacco-holders. Everything they have to say goes into the dance.

And what a superb spectacle they created! The women were less elaborately attired than the men, but they too were clothed in their own beauty, which was emphasized by the mass of bead and brass necklaces that almost covered the breasts, and the snoods and fillets of shining brass about their heads. I believe that officials have now taught them to put on white saris and cover themselves 'properly'.

The men, carrying their long drums, move in a great circle with a large variety of turns and changes; the 'bison' charge and fight each other, pick up leaves on the point of their horns, and chase the girl dancers.

The girls, each with a dancing-stick in her right hand, form a long line and go round and through the men dancers with many different movements and steps. They do not usually sing, and indeed the tune would be lost in the thunder of the drums. As they go, they beat the ground with their sticks, 'dum-dum-dum, di-dum, dum-dum'. Masked mummers, clowns dressed in straw, naked acrobats carrying clubs, wooden guns and nets, add to the gaiety of the scene.

To witness this dance was an unforgettable experience. 'Whosoever danceth not, knoweth not the way of life,' and conversely these people, for all their poverty, found in the supreme ecstatic rhythm of their dance a way of life that raised them above mediocrity into a kind of splendour.

VII

The Murias

But my most important work in Bastar was to study the ghotul, the unique dormitory-club of the Muria boys and girls. The Murias live to the north of the Marias, all over a very large wooded plateau, in substantial villages many of which could, even in my day, be reached by car. The climate was good, the people friendly and responsive, the country was easy—and the whole business was exciting and interesting and new.

At this time the Murias enjoyed almost entire freedom. Once I was off the main road and away from the few administrative centres, I hardly ever saw an official. The people lived their own life, unhampered if unimproved, and they lived it well. But what I shall say about them is a part of history now and I must write in the past tense.

The ghotul was the central focus of Muria life, coming down to modern times from Lingo, the heroic ancestor of the tribe, who founded it.

The first ghotul is described as beautiful as the horns of bison, beautiful as a horse's throat. Its central pillar was a python, its poles were cobras. The frame of the roof was made of kraits tied together with vipers and covered with the tails of peacocks. The roof of the veranda was made of bulbul feathers. The walls were of fish-bones, the door was fashioned of crimson flowers, the door-frames were the bones of ogres. The floor was plastered with pulse. The seats were crocodiles.

The lord of the house wore a turban like a white gourd-flower; his dhoti was coloured silk; his shirt shone in the sun; his clogs were made of sandalwood, his stockings of mongoose fur, his belt was a long thin snake; as he walked he sparkled. In his hand he carried the eighteen instruments of music, heavy with the charms of love.

Such is the legendary picture of Lingo and the first ghotul.

Similar institutions are widely distributed among communities of the Austro-Asiatic cultures, but it seems probable that the Muria ghotul was one of the most highly developed and carefully organized in the world. For what was a village

guardroom for the Nagas, a boys' club among the Uraons, a refuge for temporary sexual association in Indonesia, was for the Murias the centre of social and religious life. For although the ghotul was an independent autonomous children's republic, it had an all-pervading influence on the grown-ups, who could not manage any social function without its help.

All the unmarried boys and girls of the tribe had to be members of the ghotul. This membership was elaborately organized; after a period of probation, boys and girls were initiated and given special titles which carried with them graded ranks and social duties. Leaders were appointed to lead and discipline the society; the boys' leader was often called the Sirdar: the girls' leader was the Belosa. Boy members were known as cheliks and girls as motiaris.

The cheliks and motiaris had important duties to perform on all social occasions. The boys acted as acolytes at festivals, the girls as bridesmaids at weddings. They danced together before the clan-gods and at great fairs. They formed a choir at the funerals of important people. Their games and dances enlivened and enriched village life and redeemed it from that crushing monotony which was its normal characteristic in other parts of India.

It was natural that the ghotul, 'dear nurse of arts', should foster every kind of art, for here the boys and girls were all the time on their toes to attract one another and to make life what they believed it should be, beautiful, lively and interesting. And so the boys made and decorated charming little combs for their girls, and elaborate tobacco-boxes for themselves; the girls made necklaces, pendants and belts of beads and cowries. The boys carved the pillars and doors of their ghotul building, which was often the finest house in a village. They made exciting toys and masks. And above all they danced.

But this is common to many other cultures. What gave the ghotul its unique interest was the approved and recognized relationship between the boys and girls.

There were two types of ghotul. In the first, and probably the oldest, which was sometimes called the 'yoking' ghotul, the rule was that of fidelity to a single partner during the whole of the pre-marital period. Each chelik was paired off with a

motiari; he was formally 'married' to her and she took the feminine form of his title as her own. Divorce was allowed, though 'infidelity' was punished.

In the second type of ghotul, which was probably a later development of the classic model, any kind of lasting attachment between chelik and motiari was forbidden. No one could say that such and such a motiari was *his* girl; his attachment was rationed to three days at a time.

Although outwardly both types of ghotul were the same and often only the most careful investigation could distinguish them, the customs and atmosphere of the modern type were entirely distinct. Here everything was arranged to prevent long-drawn intense attachments, to eliminate jealousy and possessiveness, to deepen the sense of communal property and action. There was no ghotul marriage, there were no ghotul partners. 'Everyone belonged to everyone else' in the very spirit of *Brave New World*. A chelik and motiari might sleep together for three nights; after that they were warned; if they persisted they were punished. If a boy showed any signs of possessiveness for a particular girl, if his face fell when he saw her making love to someone else, if he got annoyed at her sleeping with another chelik, should he be offended if she refused to massage him and went to someone else, he was forcibly reminded by his fellows that she was not his wife, he had no right over her, she was the property of the whole ghotul, and if he looked like that he would be punished.

This was sometimes called the 'changing ring' ghotul; because in it you changed from girl to girl just as you changed your rings from finger to finger.

The ghotul was very literally a night-club; it was only in the evening that there was 'a noise in the belly of the elephant'; during the day, except on festivals, it was deserted. The real life of the ghotul was in the firelight.

At any time after supper, the cheliks began to assemble. They came one by one, carrying their sleeping-mats and perhaps their drums. The little boys brought their daily 'tribute' of wood, 'clocked in' by showing it to the official responsible and threw it in a corner. The elder boys gathered round the fire; one took a half-smoked leaf-pipe from his turban and ignited it by

placing a bit of glowing wood in the cup, another played a few notes on his flute, a third spread his mat and lay down. The Kotwar inspected the buildings to see if the girls had done their work properly. Gradually all the boys assembled.

Then the girls came in, with a rush, all together, and gathered round their own fire. After a while they scattered, some sitting with the boys, others singing in a corner, some lying down.

The others occupied the time in pleasant harmony; sometimes they danced for an hour or two; the smaller children played rampageous games; sometimes they just sat round the fire and talked; in the hot weather on a moonlit night they scattered all about the compound. Often they sang lying down, two by two, chelik with motiari, or in little groups. A boy told a story; they asked riddles; they reported on the affairs of the day; there was sometimes a ghotul trial; they planned a dancing expedition or allotted duties at a wedding. I shall never forget the sight in some of the larger ghotuls of sixty or seventy youngsters thus engaged.

After an hour or two of dancing, singing, games or story-telling, certainly not much after ten o'clock, the serious business of the evening began. The little boys went round saluting their elders, a ritual then repeated by the girls. One of them distributed finely-powdered tobacco from the ghotul store, to which all the parents contributed. Then the girls each went to her partner of the day and sat down behind him. First of all, she shook out and arranged his hair and then combed it. When this was done, she massaged him, sometimes with oilseed, sometimes rubbing his back with her comb, and then she cracked his fingers one by one.

By then it was fairly late and the boys and girls prepared to sleep. The little boys and girls slept in long rows, while those who had permanent or temporary partners lay down with them in each other's arms on their sleeping-mats.

Every night, when everything had warmed up, there came a moment when I had to leave the ghotul. I would have given almost anything to have stayed on, to have traced (having watched the process of tumescence) the story to its end, even if only as an observer. But the rules were very definite and I knew that if I broke them even once my chances of obtaining

information might be lost. So I always went away to my cold and comfortless camp, nostalgic for the happy, exciting world I left behind.

In the very early morning the Belosa got up and went round the ghotul rousing her girls. They had to be out of the building before dawn. 'They leave early', a boy told me, 'because they come laughing from the arms of the cheliks and feel shy about it.'

At least at the time I knew them, the Murias had a simple, innocent and natural attitude to sex. In the ghotul this was strengthened by the absence of any sense of guilt and the general freedom from external interference. The Murias believed that sexual congress was a good thing; it did you good; it was healthy and beautiful; when performed by the right people (such as a chelik and motiari who were not taboo to one another), at the right time (outside the menstrual period and avoiding forbidden days), and in the right place (within the ghotul walls where no 'sin' could be committed), it was the happiest and best thing in life.

This belief in sex as something good and normal gave the Murias a light touch. Their saying that the young lovers were *hassi ki nat*, in a 'joking relationship' to each other, expressed their attitude exactly. Sex was great fun; it was the best of ghotul games; it was the dance of enraptured bodies; it was an ecstatic swinging in the arms of the beloved. It ought not to be too intense; it must not be degraded by possessiveness or defiled by jealousy. It was believed that the best and most successful sex relations were to be had in the modern ghotul where partners often changed.

All this was, of course, very shocking to the conventionally-minded. Yet there is much to be said on the Murias' side. In the first place the cheliks and motiari were wonderfully happy. Their life was full, interesting, exciting, useful. The ghotul was, as they often said, 'a little school'. The cheliks were 'like Boy Scouts', as I was told in a village which had a troop in the local school. There was no comparison between these children and the sad-eyed, dirty ragamuffins of villages at a similar cultural level elsewhere. In the ghotul the children were taught lessons of cleanliness, discipline and hard work that remained with

them throughout their lives. They were taught to take a pride in their appearance, to respect themselves and their elders; above all, they were taught the spirit of service. These boys and girls worked very hard indeed for the public good. They were immediately available for the service of State officials or for labour on the roads. They had to be ready to work at a wedding or a funeral. They had to attend to the drudgery of festivals. In most tribal villages of the Central Provinces the children were slack, dirty, undisciplined and with no sense of public spirit. The Murias were very different.

With all this the missionary or social reformer would be in agreement. 'But', they would say, 'that is not the point. Our complaint is that these boys and girls sleep together.' It was at least one point in their favour that this sleeping together did not seem to do them a great deal of harm. There were no signs of corruption or excess; these bright-eyed, merry-faced boys and girls did not give you the impression of being the victims of debasing lust. They were living a life of fulfilment and it seemed to do them good.

They did (perhaps they still do) sleep together, but under conditions of discipline and some restraint. Children in other tribal villages also have sexual congress but without discipline and restraint. The tribal and semi-tribal boys whom I knew for so many years in other parts of central India all too often began their sexual life before the age of twelve and indulged in it freely till they were married and after. It is notorious that venereal disease has long been rampant throughout tribal India, and some of the most pathetic sights I have seen have been cases of young boys and girls afflicted by it. I have no hesitation in saying that for the areas that I know intimately, there was more sexual excess among young people in ordinary villages than in ghotul villages.

Another interesting and curious point is that there were few people with a stronger sense of domestic morality and conjugal fidelity than the Muria. Adultery was very rare, and was visited with supernatural punishment when it did occur. You could not find happier or more united families. One of the reasons for this was that the ghotul system discouraged the custom of child-marriage which was then rapidly spreading through tribal

India. Among romantically-minded tribal people, child-marriage means, inevitably, domestic infidelity. Boys or girls find themselves tied to partners in whom they have no interest and naturally leave them and seek others. Another reason for this remarkable fidelity among the Murias was that in many ghotuls boys and girls were 'married' and were taught the necessity of fidelity to their partners. In the other type of ghotul, they grew up from their earliest years to believe that, though change is the mark of the unmarried, stability must characterize the married. Once a girl was in your *haq* or 'right' she must stay there and you must stay with her.

Now one of the drawbacks of semi-tribal India is domestic infidelity. Divorce is universal, elopement common, adultery an everyday affair. The ghotul villages have a much higher standard in this respect. The incidence of divorce in Bastar was under 3 per cent. An examination of 50 marriages in Patangarh showed 23 divorces or 46 per cent.

We may also consider how the ghotul boys and girls were almost completely free from those furtive and unpleasant vices that so mar our modern civilization. There was hardly any masturbation; where it was practised, it was due to the mistaken efforts of reformers to improve the ghotul. Prostitution was unknown, unthinkable. No motiari would ever give her body for money.

The village dormitory is a symptom of a certain stage of cultural development. We ourselves consider that we have outgrown it; we may grow into it again. In the days when I shared the free and happy life of the Murias I used sometimes to wonder whether I was a hundred years behind the times or a hundred years ahead. I do not suggest that we should replace the Public Schools by ghotuls and turn our own children into cheliks and motiari, but I do suggest that there are elements in ghotul life and teaching which we should do well to ponder and that an infection of the Muria spirit would do few of us any harm.

The message of the ghotul—that youth must be served, that freedom and happiness are more to be treasured than any material gain, that friendliness and sympathy, hospitality and unity are of the first importance, and above all that human

love—and its physical expression—is beautiful, clean and precious, is typically Indian. The ghotul is no Austro-Asiatic alien in the Indian scene. Here was the atmosphere of the best old India; here was something of the life (though on a humble scale) portrayed at Ajanta; here was something (though now altogether human) of the Krishna legend and its ultimate significance; this was the same life, the same tradition that inspired the Pahari paintings.

I wrote a big book of over 750 pages, *The Muria and their Ghotul*, about all this, studying first the whole life of the tribe and then going on to describe in great detail the life in the ghotul itself.

At the beginning of the book, I put three fine quotations. The first was from St Paul—'Unto the pure all things are pure; but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled.'

The second quotation was from Hirschfeld: 'For thousands of years human folly has overwhelmed love with debris, pelted love with filth. To liberate love from this is to restore that vital human value which among all human values stands supreme.'

And the third was from Westermarck: 'The concealment of truth is the only indecorum known to science; and to keep anything secret within its cold and passionless expanse would be as prudish as to throw a cloth round a naked statue.'

Even supported by this, I was not sure how the book would be received in India but in fact it was taken very well. A Bombay publisher tried hard to persuade me to put my discoveries of Baiga, Muria and other tribal intimate relations into *A Sexual Life of Tribal India*, but I resisted this, for my aim was never to titillate the reader's fancy, but to make a serious contribution to sexual knowledge, and this could only be done by regarding sex as a part of life as a whole: it could not be described in isolation, at least not by me.

My book was translated into French by Dr A. Bigot, a friend with whom I have often corresponded but never met, as *Maisons des Jeunes chez les Muria* and published by Gallimard. By this time, the English version had been long out of print and when an Italian translation was proposed, we could not find a copy and had to supply the publishers in Rome with the French

version. This was actually an advantage since Dr Bigot had abridged the original and made a much more serviceable book. Descriptions of the *comportement sexuel* of the Murias go better in French than in English.

VIII

In December 1942 I paid my first visit to Orissa. The Darbars of the Bonai, Keonjhar and Pal Lahara States, at the suggestion of Norval Mitchell who had by then moved on to take charge of the Eastern States Agency, invited me to tour in the tribal areas of these States, inquire into the life and habits of the people and make recommendations towards the solution of the problem of shifting-cultivation which was very widespread there at this time.

In view of the fact that it is frequently said that the British Government never took any interest in the tribal people, it is only fair to give my terms of reference, which incidentally give a programme for the philanthropologist.

Mr Elwin's task would be to show how best the people could be led away from shifting-cultivation into the settled life of the permanent cultivator after inquiring into their social, religious, economic, and physical conditions. In other words, the expert knowledge of an anthropologist would be added to the expert knowledge of Forest Officers. He would consider what elements of aboriginal life and culture should be preserved, and what should be regarded as anti-social. He should after his inquiry be in a position to advise what should be done to recompense and console aboriginals for the loss of their shifting-cultivation, with particular attention to arts and crafts, to see whether those could be preserved and developed in both the cultural and economic interest of the people. He would observe any other relevant features of aboriginal life, such as their need of medical services or education. The final result would be a full picture of the problem in all its aspects, which might be summed up as technical and humanitarian, against the background of which future policy and orders could be framed.

My charter of duties was once expressed more succinctly by another, very liberal, British official, who said, 'Your job is to

make such a damned nuisance of yourself that we shall be forced to help your people.'

I found this tour, in the course of which I had some bad attacks of fever but was assisted by a couple of elephants, extremely interesting and I think my Report was useful. But this was the only time in all these years that I was met with opposition and for a very curious reason—that the villagers thought I had come to stop shifting-cultivation and rob them of their land whereas my Report actually made very different recommendations.

All sorts of rumours went about. An English official had gone with the Forest Adviser to the Bhuiya Pirh the previous year and the villagers believed that they were pursuing two European fugitives supposed to be hiding in the hills. Popular rumour had it that I myself was seeking to establish a place of refuge in the event of a Japanese invasion. In Bonai a belief that we were exporting girls 'for the war' meant that I hardly ever saw a woman who was not over military age. In the wilder Juang hills of Keonjhar, though some of the people remembered the former Administrator Macmillan (a popular, and then almost legendary, figure who married a Bhuiya girl), many had never seen a white face before and, believing me to be an evil spirit, fled into the jungle with shrill cries of horror and amazement.

But these suspicions soon disappeared and before long, specially in Pal Lahara and among the Juangs, there was a very friendly atmosphere—to which our elephants and Kumar, then a small baby, largely contributed. I soon found myself being called the 'Rusi Sahib'—Rusi being the name of the ancient cult-hero of the tribe. And once friendly, the Juangs were almost embarrassing in their attentions. They were full of interest about my way of life, invading the tent at all times, and even peeping into my bathroom (a very small leaf-hut) to study my techniques. Indeed, I often felt as if I was a museum specimen and the Juangs members of an ethnological committee investigating a creature of the absurdest habits!

One morning an aeroplane hummed distantly overhead. 'Do you see that?' said a Juang friend, 'It is Victoria Rani come for an inspection of her Raj, to see how it is getting on.' If she

was really in the plane, I thought, and could see what was happening to her Empire today, she would probably fall out. But it started a discussion about aeroplanes. Somebody thought they ran on very thin wires stretched across the sky. Someone else suggested that there were men in them, special kind of men who did not eat ordinary food, but lived on air. The Saoras told us later that aeroplanes diffused a noxious vapour which gave fever to the children in the villages over which they passed.

This conversation illustrates how unusually out of touch with things were the Juangs, whom Dalton called 'the most primitive people I have ever met with or read of'.

At that time a visit to the Juang country was fascinating. The country was wild and beautiful. The journeys continually surprised us with the splendour of the landscape, and the palm-girt flat lands round darling Malyagiri, whose rocks caught the sun in ever-changing shades of colour, were unforgettable. In early December, the country had special charm, for all the hills were carpeted with fields of yellow sarson.

Two things about the Juangs stirred me very deeply. One was their poverty, the other their grace and beauty as displayed in their 'animal ballet'. To see a typical Juang village one had to go to the highest uplands of Keonjhar. Here were some of the most picturesque hamlets in peninsular India, comparable only to the enchanting Bondo villages of the Koraput Hills. Each village stood self-contained within a large fence in a site chosen not only for convenience but also for beauty. The houses, little huts of mud with red walls, were either in a huddle on top of one another or neatly arranged in narrow streets. Near by were well-kept sheds for goats and cattle. In the centre of the village was an open space used for a dancing-ground in front of the often imposing village dormitory or club, the Darbar, where the unmarried youths slept and the elders assembled on all important occasions. The people were comparatively prosperous.

The Juangs of Pal Lahara presented a melancholy contrast to those of Keonjhar. In the second decade of the present century, the forest round the slopes of Malyagiri was reserved and the Juangs suddenly found themselves cut off from their normal means of livelihood. They were given cattle and land in

villages at the foot of the mountains, but they could not take to the unfamiliar plough, wild elephants destroyed the crops, and the cattle, 'which were old and decrepit', died in a year or two. The Juangs swiftly fell into the position of landless serfs in economic bondage to their neighbours, got more and more into debt, lost their fields and, when I saw them, were making a miserable living by weaving baskets—one of the most pitifully unremunerative of India's village industries. A man could make one large basket a day and got half an anna for it. He paid eight annas a year, or the equivalent of sixteen days' work, for the privilege of taking bamboo from the forest he regarded as his.

The economic condition of these Juangs was deplorable. I shall not easily forget going by night into a Juang village and seeing old women, naked but for a single rag about the loins, lying on the bare ground and trying to get a little warmth from a flickering fire. The physique of the people was poor and they were very diseased; the fine hard struggle with wild Nature in Keonjhar developed muscle and strength—but in Pal Lahara basket-making was a sedentary craft.

Even worse than their economic decay was their complete religious and cultural collapse. Gone were the fine Darbar halls, with their often remarkable carvings, of the Keonjhar Hills. Gone were the stone pillars to the village goddess. Since they had lost their own land, the Juangs themselves were unable to offer worship or sacrifice to their gods; they had to call in (and pay for) outside priests and magicians to help them. The beautifully fashioned combs, the elaborate smoker's equipment, the gay necklaces, which were so marked a feature of Keonjhar Juang life, were hardly known here.

The Juangs of Pal Lahara were the worst possible advertisement for a policy of stopping axe-cultivation or of moving people down to the plains. They underlined everything that the most captious critics have said against the forest administration. They were a pitiful instance of what happens when highlanders are dislodged from their mountains.

The traditional dress of Juang women was a mass of bead ornaments round the neck and a skirt of leaves fastened about the waist by a girdle of bugles of baked earth. This dress was

established in the tribe's mythology and hedged about with the sanctions of religion.

The year 1871 was a bad one for the tribal people. In central India British officials were forcing the Baigas to commit the sin of lacerating the breasts of Mother Earth with the plough, thus throwing them into a psychological confusion from which they have never fully recovered. In Orissa other officials were persuading the Juangs to change their costume. A meeting was held and some two thousand pieces of cloth were distributed, after which the leaves were gathered in a heap and burnt. 'Persuasion' continued and a majority of Juangs took to putting on filthy rags instead of the beautiful and hygienic leaf-dress.

The futility of introducing the outward garb of civilization without doing anything to instil its spirit is seen in the effect this had on the Juangs, who still look back to the day when the sacred leaves were burnt as a conquered nation might recall the day of its defeat.

Since that time, the Juangs say, Sat—the spirit of truth and religion, the power to live safely in a world of hostile magic—has left the tribe. Tigers attack the cattle with impunity and the offended earth gives but a scanty crop.

This may seem odd today but to force improvement on very simple people without at the same time having an adequate programme of development to make their lives fuller, richer and happier can be disastrous and I was deeply disturbed by what I saw in the Juang hills and wrote strongly about it.

I have spoken of the extraordinary aesthetic experience of a genuine dance of the Juangs in the old style.

Long ago Dalton wrote splendidly about their 'animal ballet', and the dances which I saw again and again in 1943 were very like those he saw in 1866. Some of the women were still wearing their leaf-dress all the time, and they all put it on for ceremonial and special occasions. I do not know whether the custom still remains or how far they are maintaining their traditional ballet today, for one of the saddest things about the march of civilization into the forests is the way it kills so many forms of artistic expression. But when I saw it, the dancing was still adept and beautiful beyond words. The bright green leaves

threw into relief the golden-brown bodies of the girls, whose beauty was so gracefully displayed. I specially remember the peacock and deer dances when the girls moved with the grace of the loveliest of all the creatures of the forest. They imitated the elephant and the vulture well too, and when they squatted on the ground like quails to peck up their food their movements were as characteristic as they were rhythmical.

At the end of my expedition, I wrote—among many other things: 'Today the Juangs are a small and impoverished tribe; they demand great sympathy and knowledge for their administration. They live in forests capable of yielding great wealth; surely some portion of that wealth should be made available to them so that they can enjoy fuller and happier lives.' It is only now that this is being done and, even now, I hope it is being done properly.

Christoph von Fürer-Haimendorf, always a most successful explorer, had paid a visit to the Gadabas and Bondos while I was in Bastar and had written to me with enthusiasm of the beauty of the country and the attractiveness of the people. Once I had finished work on my book about the Muria dormitory, and encouraged by my experiences among the Juangs, I decided to extend my interest to the Ganjam and Koraput Districts of Orissa. On my first trip I was escorted by a large, friendly, generous-hearted timber-man, Val Blackburn, who lived in Raipur. He took me into the very wild and almost unexplored country of the Kuttia Konds. A little later, we climbed the Nimgiri mountain together and, later still, I made the first of several visits to the high Bondo plateau and at the same time made some study of the neighbouring Gadabas. Later, I moved across to the Saora country in Parlakimedi and Gunupur, quite the most lovely tribal area that I have ever seen anywhere. Here I found, in Gilbert Murray's phrase, 'the apple tree, the singing, and the gold'.

Touring, however, was already becoming more expensive, though not so ruinously so as it is today, and it became evident that to remain in the private sector would greatly hamper my work. I had made friends with some of the Orissa officials, who were very suspicious at first on account of my political opinions, but later evidently became convinced that I was not up to

anything, and I was finally appointed Hon. Anthropologist to Orissa on an honorarium which covered my expenses. Long afterwards the late Mr S. Fazl Ali told me that when he was Governor of Orissa he had decided to invite me to be Adviser for Tribal Affairs for the State but, just as he was going to put the matter through, he heard that I had been sent by the Prime Minister to N E F A.

Out of my Orissa explorations came three books—*Bondo Highlander*, *The Religion of an Indian Tribe* (about the Saoras) and *Tribal Myths of Orissa*, as well as a special number of *Man in India* about the Juangs. I also wrote a number of reports for Government and made recommendations for the welfare of the tribal people. Had I been more energetic I could have done at least two more books, for I had a great many notes on the Gadabas and Konds and a large collection of photographs.

I will now give brief descriptions of three of the tribes I visited—the Kuttia Konds, the Bondos and the Saoras. They are not 'anthropological' descriptions and the reader who wants a detailed account must go elsewhere. It may perhaps be questioned whether what I say here and in chapter 9 on the N E F A tribes has a legitimate place in an autobiography. I think it has. The tribes were such an important part of my life and brought so much interest and pleasure into it that without them, without the Baigas and Murias, the Bondos, Konds and Saoras, my story would be incomplete. The Baigas introduced me to the wilder forests; the Kuttia Konds and Marias kindled and educated my sense of beauty. I thought about the Saoras, talked to and about them, loved them, was absorbed in them for years. I thought myself into the Murias, fascinated by not only the academic but also the human problems raised by their unusual social system. Only those who have some idea of them can really understand me. My entire attitude to life has been affected by the lovable N E F A folk. Apart from these tribes who, one by one, filled my life to the brim, there is not very much for me to talk about. Of the great events of my time I have only been a spectator; I have met very few important people. It is the tribes who have been my life and that is why I have had to put them in its record.

IX

The Kuttia Konds

First let me describe the wild, remote and devastatingly attractive Kuttia Konds.

The Konds are a large tribe, speaking a Dravidian language akin to Gondi, who are scattered all over Orissa, but the Kuttia Konds are confined to the desolate hills and forests in the north-western corner of the Ganjam District. These Kuttias were very poor, very timid, strikingly good-looking and, once you got to know them, charming and loyal friends.

They had a good deal of cause for their timidity. They were grossly oppressed by Dom moneylenders and Patro landlords; they had a hard time from the officials of the Forest Department; their simplicity made them fair game for any rascally merchant or black-marketeer who adventured into their hills; and they lived in an area where wild animals made frequent attacks on their lives and property.

During my first visit to their hills, a Kond, who was carrying my mail down to the railway, was killed by a tiger and next morning, when we went to the spot, all we could find was a pool of blood and my letters scattered about the jungle. Wild elephants also were a constant danger and did great damage to the crops. Sometimes on tour we moved as a sort of convoy, all sorts of people joining our party for protection through a dangerous tract.

The Konds were constantly shifting their villages, which they built in such inaccessible places that there was often no level spot for us to make a camp. Like the Baigas, they were passionately devoted to the practice of axe-cultivation, though they were much more careful than the Baigas in observing a rotation so as not to ruin the forest permanently. Each village had perhaps a dozen traditional sites to which it shifted in turn when the available forest in the neighbourhood had been exhausted. Their houses were very small, often with tiny doors. Once when I was camping in one of their huts, the door was so low that I had to crawl in and out on my hands and knees.

The villages, however, were often very picturesque. They

were usually laid out in two long rows of houses, each joined to its neighbour. In the middle, standing up impressively against the sky, was a forked pillar of sacrifice with buffalo horns placed on its points. The stone of Mother Earth stood in front of three other stones which served it as a protecting wall. Often there was an elaborately carved pillar of sacrifice, decorated with such relics as a buffalo's skull, the tail of a barking-deer, sambhar bones or a buffalo's hoof. The villages were usually kept spotlessly clean.

Even in 1944 the desire for human sacrifice was fundamental to Kond psychology. It will be remembered that, about a hundred years ago, the Government put an end to the savage Meriah sacrifices—human beings, who were offered to the Earth Goddess in order to fertilize the soil. It was hard to believe that these simple inoffensive folk could ever have practised so barbarous a rite or could even now long so greatly for its restoration. But it was so. In almost every village, hidden away in a priest's house, were the old implements of sacrifice—the knife, the chains, the bowl to catch the blood—and the priests told me how at certain seasons when the moon was full they could hear these horrid tools weeping for the human blood which was now denied them.

There were still carefully treasured a few human skulls, perhaps a hundred years old, or bits of human bone, which were brought out at special ceremonies or used as amulets. A great hunter, who had a bit of finger bone, told me that he attributed all his luck in the chase to his possession of it.

Long ago, when the Meriah sacrifice was put down by Government, the Konds began to sacrifice buffaloes in place of human victims. When this was done, an old human skull or mask was brought out and laid before the symbols of divinity. There was, when I was there, an attempt being made by well-meaning but not very intelligent persons to stop even the buffalo sacrifices in the interests of vegetarianism.

The Konds were devotedly attached to that 'vile weed' of which Charles Lamb used to speak so eloquently. The boys made excellent tobacco-tubes, decorated with patterns of lozenges and triangles. Their legend of the origin of tobacco is told all over tribal India, even in NEFA. There was once a

very ugly girl whom no one would marry. She did her best to get a husband, but no one wanted her. In despair she went to the Creator and begged to be allowed to die, and to return in her next birth as something which all men would love. He granted her request and after her death caused a tobacco plant to grow out of her despised body. And so the girl whom nobody wanted is now the desire of all the world.

The Kuttia Konds had nothing—and everything. Long ago I wrote some verses about them which puts it better than anything I could say now.

The True Treasure

They have no treasure as the world counts gain.
Some starving cattle ; a small bin of grain ;
Torn scraps of dirty cloth ; a string of beads ;
A mat, a broken bed, a pot of seeds,

A basketful of roots, a little meat,
The bows and arrows and a wooden seat,
Is all their low-roofed hovels boast of store.
Such is the sad accounting of the poor.

They have no treasure? Let us look again.
See how their courage triumphs over pain ;
How patiently they cast the annual seed ;
How steadfastly they bear their daily need.

These riches of the spirit are their power.
And then—the beauty like a perfect flower
That blossoms as the lotus from the mud,
The glory of the children in the bud.

See the fine bodies, unimproved by art,
The plum-black hair that twines about the heart,
The eyes that with the grace of fireflies move,
The shining teeth, the breasts that foster love.

Regard the features ravishing and dark,
And the gay song-filled voices. Hark, O hark,
To the sweet koel-music of their words
That dance and wanton with the coloured birds.

The breathing loveliness of human clay,
Though transient, transforms the hardest day.
How can we call them poor, whose wealth unbought
By contrast turns the rich man's gold to naught?

X

The Bondos

Some years ago Michael Huxley asked me to do a piece for the *Geographical Magazine* on 'My Worst Journey', part of which I will reproduce here. I began by saying that I did not find it easy to describe my worst journey, for I had never made a journey that was entirely bad. And I went on to summarize my experiences in the period before I went to Assam.

On the whole [I wrote] my travels in tribal India have been exceedingly rewarding. They have indeed often been uncomfortable; the marching and climbing has been arduous enough; I have had my share of sharp fevers with their dreary sequels, far from medical assistance; supplies of food have raised complicated problems. But in general, as I look back, almost all my memories are pleasant: the beauty of the countryside, the charm and friendliness of the people, the excitement of scientific inquiry, the support of devoted assistants, the alliance of true friends—these things have made a quarter of a century, the greater part of which has been spent far from the imagined comforts of civilization and the supposed stimulus of educated conversation, a period of singular happiness.

But of course I have had my troubles. I have been bored by delays, irritated by tedious officials, exasperated by puritans, padres and police, disappointed, frustrated, wearied, as every traveller must be. But not a single tour or expedition has been without its great rewards.

First visits to any area are difficult: you do not know the country or the language; interpreters are hard to come by and, until they are trained, are usually worse than useless; you yourself are unfamiliar and the people are not sure what you are up to: all the minor irritations of life are magnified. And of these first tours, I think the most difficult was the one I made into the Bondo country of Orissa in December 1943.

The Bondos are a small tribe of the type now often called Austro-Asiatic which—at the time of the 1941 Census—numbered only 2,565 persons. Their country, elevated, beautiful and remote, lies north-west of the Machkund river. Notorious for their violent and inhospitable ways, they have preserved

themselves comparatively unaffected by the march of civilization. Indeed by plainsmen and officials the Bondos are regarded as entirely savage, almost as the classic savage type: the strange dress and appearance of the women with their exiguous skirts and shaven heads, the passionate and homicidal temper of the men, their unfamiliar tongue, the inaccessibility of their abode, have long separated them from their mild and conventional neighbours. I do not know what has happened to them in recent years, but when I visited them for the last time in 1947, the only change I found was in their reaction to myself: by now suspicion had given way to an almost overwhelming friendliness.

The end of 1943 was, of course, a bad time to get about. All maps were, very properly, controlled by the military authorities, and so I had very little idea of where anything was. Food, with equal propriety, was strictly rationed, and for a traveller to obtain the necessary permits involved endless waiting about in dreary offices. Rations were issued by the week, but I needed supplies for several months. There was no regulation, the matter would have to be referred to Cuttack, what was the real purpose of my visit?

Many things were not available at all. The absence of tinned foods did not worry me, for I detest the stuff, but condensed milk was a necessity in a part of the world where milk was taboo. And of course there was no petrol.

To reach the Bondo country, if there was no petrol to drive your car, involved a train-journey from Calcutta to Vizianagaram, and then a ninety-mile trip by country bus through lovely scenery to Koraput. The road winds steeply through the hills, and many of the passengers were sick. At Koraput the chief official had been a contemporary of mine at Oxford, but did not think it necessary to look after me, and I was accommodated in a sleazy dak-bungalow with broken windows. Sitting among the rats and fleas, I recollected with satisfaction that my fellow-collegian had taken a poor Third in History.

In the India of that time, unless you were an official, rich, or had unimpeachable or intimidating introductions, no one took very much notice of you. This was evident when we continued our journey for the further fourteen miles to Jeypore

where a sumptuous guest-house was maintained by the Maharaja. Here everybody settled down to make my further progress as difficult as possible. In later years, I am glad to say, the local people were as helpful as they were then obstructive.

We first had to reach a place called Govindapalle, forty miles away. There was a bus, but it was not running that week: the proprietor's nephew was getting married. I waited several days and then put my stores and equipment on a couple of bullock-carts, a mode of travel which I have always rather enjoyed. Its one disadvantage is that it exposes you to interrogations: who was I, what was I doing, what was my aim in going to the Bondos?—everybody wanted to know. However, we reached our first Bondo village safely, but there discovered that no one was willing to go with us up into the hills. The Bondos were not used to carrying other people's loads—and who could blame them? It took a long time and much persuasion to get a dozen porters. But we did get them in the end, and one glorious morning climbed the steep hills to an enchantingly situated village, Dumiripada, on the top of the world.

It was beautiful, it was romantic, but it was not hospitable. There was no hostility: crowds of men, women and children thronged round as we put up a few leafy branches to make some sort of hut; they all beamed amiably, but no one would move a finger to help. Requests for wood and water, on extravagant payment, were met by charming smiles—but no action followed. The headman came, and he did his best, but Bondo headmen have little authority. At last, after tremendous argument and much shouting among themselves, a few boys brought just enough water for the kitchen.

The Bondos, in fact, are remarkably unwilling to oblige. They are prepared to sit round in the friendliest fashion, laughing, joking and chatting, so long as you do not ask them to do anything. They are always ready to give information. But they object very much to giving anything else. They have no apparent desire to earn money. At one village I offered some boys who had nothing whatever to do the equivalent of three days' earnings to catch some fish for me, but they refused. They dislike selling any of their possessions, and to live off the country here is a real problem. This was not a cause of irrita-

tion, for why *should* they do anything? But it was a practical difficulty.

Such help as we got came from an unexpected source. I have had the privilege of knowing a good many murderers, but hitherto most of these had been in jail. In the Bondo country, where the homicide rate is the highest in all India, murder is usually punished by a comparatively short sentence of five or seven years, and I found that the most affable and helpful people were those who had done time, even though I was sometimes apprehensive that one of them might feel the need of a little further practice. A further advantage was that these charming if ferocious ex-convicts usually knew some Hindi or Oriya, and we were therefore able to converse with them direct instead of through an interpreter.

Our next village, Bandapada, was very timid. As I went down the street, mothers seized their children and hurried them indoors, girls fled whimpering with fright, doors banged, fowls and pigs scurried to safety, one youth hastily got up a tree. Only a few old men, greatly daring, came to greet us. I can endure any hardship other than the realization that I look like a sort of ogre. Later I heard that it was supposed that I had come to take girls for the war, that I was going to send all the children to America to be baptized, and—most curious of all—that I was an Excise Officer who had come to introduce Prohibition. After a time, however, a delightful person, who had twice been to prison for successive murders and, as far as I could discover, was even then planning a third, turned up and with his help we got some kind of roof over our heads and a meagre supply of necessities.

I then brought out the gramophone, which is usually a great success. No sooner, however, had I put on a rather dreadful record entitled 'Fun with the Concertina', which I regret to say is everywhere in great demand, than one old woman fell down in a fit, several others flopped to the ground in an attitude of worship, and all the children ran screaming from the place. A deputation of elders quickly arrived to ask me to stop the music, if that is the correct word, as it was evident that there was something very dangerous inside the sound-box and they did not want to take any risks.

In the Bondo and Saora villages I departed from my usual custom of staying in someone's house and instead we made little huts for ourselves,

Under the bam
Under the boo
Under the bamboo tree.

These were of leafy branches with a deep layer of straw underfoot and a rough thatch above. They were surprisingly comfortable but unfortunately they were edible and almost every night cattle would come and start eating the walls, which was a constant disturbance.

On later visits I had a very pleasant time with the Bondos. On one of them Shamrao with his wife and two small children, Suresh and Ramula, accompanied me and on my last trip I had Victor Sassoon, who enjoyed himself thoroughly and took a large number of first-class photographs, some of which I reproduced in my book, *Bondo Highlander*.

And the Bondos were well worth photographing, for on the whole they are a good-looking people. Boys and young men are often most attractive. Their fine carriage, magnificent physique, free and open countenance, delightful smile, are captivating. The way they do their hair is specially charming. As they grow older, however, they degenerate a little; the face coarsens, the body is dirtier, the hair is done in a different, and less pleasing, fashion. Like most tribesmen above a certain age, the Bondos let themselves go. In jail, they look terrible.

At first sight a visitor may exclaim that Bondo women are the ugliest he has ever seen. But in a few days, after he has got over the first shock of their rather unconventional appearance, he may revise his opinion. The illusion of ugliness is largely created by the shaven head. But a young girl with something covering her head—a fish-basket or a sickle-curved bundle of bark—often shows the world a face of character and charm. Little girls, ten or twelve years old, are sometimes very pretty, especially when they decorate their head-bands with sprigs of greenery and white, mauve or scarlet flowers. The chief fault of the older girls (apart, of course, from the lack of hair) is that there is perhaps a little too much of them. They are apt

to be plump, rather sleek and smooth, big-lipped, bagpipe-breasted, with large thighs, thick calves, 'thick as plantain stalks'. Older women are often very charming with good features and an indefinable attraction that speedily made one forget the oddity of their appearance.

Bondo boys have very definite views about feminine beauty and one day a group of them used some rather poetical expressions while attempting to explain the meaning of a love-song. The phrases are probably traditional or at least based on the highly condensed song-technique. They described a girl's body as 'beautiful as a white cloud', her arms and legs 'round and shapely as a bamboo', her breasts 'sparkling as two fishes'; her shadow 'broad and healthy as a buffalo'. Above all, the beautiful girl is 'useful as the leaf of a giant creeper'—from which leaf-cups and plates are made.

The Bondo sexual tradition was very different from the Muria. To the Bondos sexual experience was difficult, dangerous and expensive; while the Gond or Baiga often thought of intercourse as little more than a pleasant experience, the Bondo regarded it as a very serious matter. There were several reasons for this. The Bondo youth was bound by the most rigorous taboos from having anything to do with the girls of his own village; when he met the girls of other villages, he did so in public and under conditions of the strictest conventionality. This placed an effective brake on those casual everyday affairs which were the normal recreation of village boys in other parts of India. Then again sexual intercourse was a risky matter; it involved the introduction of the most precious of life's possessions into an unknown and alien world. This was something fundamental in the psychology of the tribe; the Bondo could not bear going abroad. That was his real torment in jail; that was why he was so unwilling to carry our baggage to another village—I once saw a group of women weeping in utter despair because a member of the household was carrying some of my things to a place only four miles away. Like other tribesmen, the Bondos had the strange and sinister legend of the Vagina Dentata, which is closely connected with the fear of castration. These legends, which I have found among many Indian tribes and which have also been recorded in North America and from the

Ainus, were entirely serious. They were not just dirty stories calculated to raise a hiccupping chuckle in the dormitory; they were the attempt of Bondo fiction to suggest the risk of sexual congress.

But the most potent influence against promiscuity was that the girls would not have it. It is generally admitted in other tribal societies—and I believe it is largely true—that it is the girls who lead men on. But this was not true of the Bondo girls. To them sexual intercourse in the pre-marital period implied a serious intention; it was almost equivalent to a betrothal. The Saora youth drove an arrow between breasts carved in wood on the pillar of the house where his beloved lived; after that she was his. But if the Bondo youth translated this symbolism into actuality, he was caught: he was hers.

All this was characteristic of the eastern group of tribes, who were remarkable for their sexual reticence. The Saoras had the same outlook, so did the Juangs, Gadabas and Marias. But the Gond group had a very different tradition. The Gonds, Pardhans, Konds and other allied tribes regarded the expression of sexual passion, however delightful it might be, as a comparatively trivial affair, to be indulged as a passing entertainment, unimportant (provided certain conventions were observed) in its effects. This does not mean that they do not fall in love; they do, deeply and disastrously; but they found it possible at the same time and in a different compartment, as it were, to enjoy sex without getting too much involved.

I came to like the Bondos immensely and made many personal friends among them. They were not only very lovable but unusually exciting. This was due mainly to their bad tempers, which meant that you never knew what was going to happen next. The Bondos were aware of this defect and had devised a curious and unique rite of mutual castigation, for the express purpose of teaching themselves to keep their tempers. Conducted with a mixture of ferocity and hilarity, it began with little boys. To the excited beating of drums they armed themselves with long switches, stood up two by two, and beat each other as hard as they could. It was no pretence; soon backs were covered with weals, and the little fellows bit their lips as they went for each other with all their strength. When a couple

had had enough they saluted one another with mutual respect, clasped each other in a warm embrace and retired in favour of another pair. When all the boys had completed this piquant exercise, the priest gave them a special kind of cake 'to stop their quarrels' and delivered a little lecture: 'Never beat anyone in anger. Let everyone treat his fellow as a brother. Never make other people angry.'

This was all right. The anxiety came when young men, perhaps jealous rivals for the same girl, or old toughs hardened by years in jail, began to beat each other: then there was a real sense of tension. I think that this unusual rite does to some extent succeed in its aim of training the Bondos to keep their tempers under the sudden stimulus of pain, and serves as a surrogate for the grosser emotions.

In spite of this there were a great many Bondo rows, some of which I was privileged to watch. I was once present at a violent quarrel when a Bondo attacked a Gadaba, who was supposed to have insulted him by exposing his private parts. The contrast between the ferocious Bondo, screaming abuse in three languages (including bits of English), and the meek Gadaba bowing before the storm with folded hands, was striking. Another day I saw a group of Bondo boys invade a Gadaba village, and rob its favourite sago palm of its juice. The Gadabas chattered with rage and anguish as they watched their precious wine slipping down the ample Bondo throats, but not one of them dared to interfere. When they had drunk their fill, the Bondo boys paraded the village with an electric insolence and charm. In spite of her rage, every Gadaba girl came out of her house and stood gazing fascinated. After executing a particularly obscene little dance just to put everyone in his place, the Bondos finally departed, leaving the village exhausted as a person through whose body has passed a powerful, but not quite fatal, shock.

It is indeed an extraordinary experience to witness a Bondo quarrel. There is first an exchange of words. Hints about a wife's chastity, allusions to a sister's virtue flicker to and fro. Then the Bondo suddenly comes to the boil; the waters rise and topple over. He twirls his moustache. He spits at his adversary. He pulls out a few hairs and throws them at him.

He chatters and bubbles with temper. And then he draws his knife or jumps for his bow and arrows.

Yet this is not the last word. Bondo life was marked by courage, freedom, equality, independence and industry. The defects of these qualities were equally evident; courage became an indifference to human life, freedom and independence degenerated into ill-mannered aggressiveness, too strong a sense of equality could become bad citizenship. The Bondo drank too much; he was often lazy and drove his womenfolk too hard; he was not very clean; he wasted a lot of time in the exact, and rather fussy, performance and repetition of ceremonial. But otherwise there was a great deal to be said for him. If he was a savage, he was at least a noble savage. If he was poor, he was at least patient and courageous in his poverty. If he was outside, and perhaps behind, the main stream of civilization, he was at least free of many of its debasing vices.

In a hotel where I stayed at Chiangmai in northern Thailand there was a notice announcing that young ladies and 'excessive persons' were not admitted into the rooms at night. The Bondos attracted me because they were excessive persons, and after all Blake once said that 'the road of excess leads to the palace of wisdom'.

XI

The Saoras

My study of the Saoras extended over seven years. I concentrated on one section of this very large tribe, the Hill Saoras of Ganjam and Koraput, and particularly of the villages in the hills above Gunupur, which at that time were almost completely untouched by missionary or other external influence and where it was possible to see the old life as it must have continued for hundreds of years.

To these I went from Patangarh to stay long periods and often made my camp in one village for two or three weeks at a time. I took my books and papers with me and settled down as though I were at home. In fact, I wrote a good deal of my

book about the Saoras on the spot, and was able to correct or verify things as I went along. The people were very good to me and used to make me charming little two-roomed huts of branches and leaves, with good verandas. The quickest way to their hearts was by gifts of country-cigars called *pikas*. For these they had, and I hope still have, a passionate attachment. They were also very fond of tea and were constantly dropping in for a cup or two. I often had half a dozen people round my bed soon after dawn anxious to share my morning tea.

Yet in my day at least, the Saoras did not really want to have visitors. After any outsider had been to the village they made special sacrifices to purify the place from any possible magical defilement. In one area I found a regular tariff: for a Forest Officer they sacrificed a goat, for a Sub-Inspector of Police a fowl, and for an anthropologist a large black pig.

They had a god called Sahibosum, who was propitiated for the express purpose of keeping touring officials away. A sahib, of course, is anything in a hat and a pair of trousers. Wooden images were made and erected outside the village. There was also an image of the 'Memsahib' goddess, usually just a little larger and more formidable than her husband. She was always represented as wearing a *sola topi*.

There was nothing personal about this. Even your best friends would make these sacrifices and erect these images. It was simply that if you came from the outside world you might bring, clinging invisibly to you, some sort of spiritual infection; a spirit or demon might use you as a vehicle to get inside the charmed village boundaries.

In spite of this, I managed to visit almost all the hill Saora villages and in some of them I felt like an explorer, for those in the remoter parts of the hills had not been visited in living memory by any outsider, and for months at a time I did not meet any official: Sahibosum had clearly been effective. I was there in the cold and also when it was very hot, indeed at all times of the year except the height of the rains.

The beauty of the country was almost overwhelming. When I was younger I had a feeling for Nature akin to that of the young Wordsworth. Natural beauty haunted me like a passion.

It was 'an appetite; a feeling and a love' that had no need for any interest 'unborrowed from the eye'.

But I think that from the very beginning of my time in tribal India I moved on to Wordsworth's further stage of hearing oftentimes 'the still, sad music of humanity' against the background of Nature. This was particularly true of my years in Bastar.

Later, in NEFA among the northern mountains, their mystery and grandeur disturbed me with the sense of the universal presence, 'the joy of elevated thoughts', of which Wordsworth writes again.

But in the Saora hills the appeal of Nature was largely sensuous. It was, it is true, always a setting for human beings and yet its impact was almost physical. I ached for it and when I had to leave it, it was always with a very heavy heart.

The Hill Saoras had large substantial villages; they erected menhirs and sacrificed buffaloes for their dead; their religious needs were served by male and female shamans; they engaged in both terraced and shifting cultivation; their men put on a long brightly-coloured loin-cloth and their women wore a handwoven brown-bordered skirt and did not usually wear anything else; the women also greatly enlarged the lobes of their ears and had a characteristic tattoo mark down the middle of the forehead. They retained their own language and very few of them spoke any other.

Saora houses were well-built and in long streets, and some Saora chieftains were comparatively wealthy. Indeed, they might all have been fairly well-to-do, so laborious and careful were they, had it not been for the shocking exploitation to which they were subjected by their landlords and moneylenders.

It was a heart-breaking sight to stand by a Saora's threshing-floor and watch his creditors and parasites remove in payment of their dues so much of the grain which he had laboured so hard to produce.

The great achievement of the Saoras is their terracing. They build up the hillsides for a thousand feet, terrace rising above terrace, perfectly aligned, so carefully done that not a drop of water escapes uselessly and all erosion is checked. Sometimes a great stone wall, 15 feet high, will hold up a ridge of cultivable

soil only three feet wide. These terraces have been rightly praised as works of great engineering skill.

The main subject of my study was Saora religion, for the Saoras are quite the most religious people I have ever met. Happily, they did not resent my inquiries but were rather flattered by them. Where other tribes postpone a festival or ceremony if a visitor comes to the village, the Saoras used to insist on my presence at everything. They took me into their houses, made me sit on the floor near the officiating priest and explained it all in great detail as the long ceremonies took their course.

In fact we used to have a saying that there was never a holiday for the anthropologist in the Saora country. Every day something happened. You were just settling down to a quiet siesta when you would hear the roar of gunfire echoing in a neighbouring valley, and you knew there was a funeral which you simply must attend. Or someone would arrive at dawn with news of a most exciting ceremony in a village five miles away and due to start in half an hour.

I was rather often ill in the Saora country, for malaria was a dangerous scourge there and I had some very bad bouts of toothache. Even this worked out well, for the priests and even the priestesses used to crowd in to my little hut, sit by my bedside and attempt to cure me by their own techniques. And cure or relieve me they often did, for their methods were extremely soothing and their affection and interest was reviving. I also learnt by personal experience a great deal about their ideas that I might otherwise have missed.

During this happy period I found that my old Oxford studies in theology, which at one time I had written off as wasted, were of unexpected value. Heiler's monumental book on prayer, for example, William James on the varieties of religious experience, Otto on the numinous element in religion as well as many other books helped me to understand the Saoras better.

Saora life was completely dominated by their religion. Beyond and around this life and this visible world is an unseen realm of vital reality, peopled by a host of spirits whose activities impinge on normal existence at every turn.

The ghosts live in an Underworld, which is something like

this world of our own, but everything is on a Lilliputian scale. The houses are very small; the clouds lie low upon the land; it is always twilight under the infernal moon. The ghosts live a sad half-life, ill-fed and poorly clad, until they themselves die again and, if they are cremated in proper form, vanish from the misery of existence forever.

But the rulers of the Underworld, the tutelary spirits, do themselves well. They have large houses, the best of food and clothing and many servants. They keep tigers and leopards (as men keep dogs) as pets. The bear is the priest and the porcupine the medicine-man of this strange world.

It is the great desire of the tutelary spirits, both male and female, to find partners among the living. They come to them in dreams and beg them to marry them. There is a special class of girls who at the age of puberty have dreamt of these unearthly lovers and after a turbulent period of wooing have agreed to marry them.

The marriage is an elaborate affair, quite as elaborate and expensive as an ordinary marriage, and when it is over, the girl is a Kuranboi, a priestess who henceforth will be able to do the work of divination and healing with the aid of her unseen husband. The Saoras believe that the girls can have children from these husbands, and I met many Saora women who had families both in this and in the other world. Sometimes, listening to the way they talked, I used to wonder which was the more real to them.

But in spite of the realm of fantasy in which they lived, these women were practical and devoted servants of their tribe. They were always ready to hasten to minister to the sick and console the sorrowful. Men also were subject to these experiences, and they became, as a result, the all-important medicine-men of the tribe.

The work of these simple 'doctors' had great survival value. It gave the patient the sense that someone cared about him. It made him believe that he was going to get well. It settled his conscience and gave him the will to recover. And the medicine-men took their profession seriously and worked very hard at it.

To the research man there is no greater happiness, no deeper love, no more thrilling excitement than to work in such a field

as this. I have found not only among the Saoras but other tribes too that there comes a moment when everything falls into place and you suddenly see the life of a people as a harmonious whole and understand how it works. This decisive moment, which can only be achieved after arduous study, is one of the greatest experiences that a scholar can have.

But it always took a long time. A friend of mine who read this book in manuscript, unlike my other friends who wanted me to put in more about my vices, told me I should say something about my virtues. 'That would be very nice,' I said, 'but what virtues have I?' He was a little stumped by this but after some thought he said, 'I think your greatest virtue is patience.' There may be something in this, for I have always been content to go forward without reward or recognition and in my search for the truth to take any trouble and to spend any amount of time in finding it. Things take me a long time, and I have always been content to wait.

Sometimes people wrote about the sacrifice I made in going into tribal India. But that is certainly not a virtue I can claim. What sacrifice could there possibly be in living in the beauty of the Saora hills or in the heart-warming atmosphere of Patangarh? There has never been a moment of sacrifice in my life; for everything I have given I have been repaid tenfold, and of myself I can say:

Love had he found in huts where poor men lie;
His daily teachers had been woods and rills,
The silence that is in the starry sky,
The sleep that is among the lonely hills.

My memories of life in Bastar and Orissa are, like my memories of Oxford, inconsolable. I shall never see, no one will ever see, the Muria ghotul as I saw it, or the Saoras as I saw them. It may be that I myself helped by my very presence to destroy what I so much admired. But all over tribal India the old freedom is disappearing and with it something of the old happiness. Change is inevitable and I have no doubt that the great schemes of village welfare have brought some profit to some of the people already and in time will bring new life to them all. How far this will in the long run result in their

happiness is a problem that vexes all those who think seriously on the subject.

But however this may be, one thing is clear. The old romantic exciting days, the beauty and the zest have gone for ever. I would not recall them if it meant loss to even a single child, yet it is hard not to feel nostalgic for what used to be.

I heard a voice that cried,
Balder the beautiful
Is dead, is dead.

XII

A special, and very important, aspect of research is photography: this led me into many adventures, especially in the early days and the remoter regions, where it was by no means easy.

The camera to many tribal people is an object not only of embarrassment, but of fear. That mysterious aperture which points in their direction in so sinister a manner, the almost inevitable fuss and preparation that precedes the taking of even the simplest photographs, the fixing of the tripod, the manoeuvring for position, cannot fail to alarm them. In a bazaar in Mandla District I saw a rather photogenic blacksmith—it was when I was writing my book about the Agarias—but when I pointed my camera at him I was startled to see a wave of fear pass over everybody within sight. The local constable came up to me, saluted smartly, and said, 'I can get you a much better man than that,' but before I realized what he meant the whole bazaar was on the move. People leapt to their feet upsetting the stalls, throwing baskets of vegetables to the ground, trampling on bales of cloth, and in a few moments they were all streaming away into the jungle. I later discovered that even the constable supposed that my camera was a sort of anthropometric instrument by which I could measure the stature of likely recruits for the Army. Another time in the Raipur District, people trembled with fear while I was photographing them and afterwards one of them said, 'You have taken all my strength and shut it up in that little box.' In another place I

found that the people supposed the camera to be a sort of X-ray instrument with which I could see right through their clothes and bodies down to their livers. Everybody knows, of course, that the liver is a very important thing in black magic. You try to affect the person's liver as a preliminary to murdering him by witchcraft. If you can get hold of a bit of the liver of a dead man or even a picture of it, it is a very potent source of supernatural power.

In Bastar, when I was making a documentary film of the Murias and Marias, I found, on the whole, that they were very good about letting me photograph them and I was often astonished at the willingness of even the children to come before the camera. But sometimes the luck was bad. I once went to photograph a Muria wedding; in fact, I was invited to go by the father of the bride, who was an old friend. For the first day everything went swimmingly. We exchanged presents: we were allowed to see everything that went on: I have seldom been in a more friendly company of people. I was able to get a number of excellent pictures. Then, on the morning of the second day, the bridegroom had a fit. I was standing nearby with my ubiquitous camera in my hand. My heart sank. I knew what would happen. Gradually, inevitably, the eyes of the entire company turned to me. I knew what they were thinking: that queer little box had brought the wrath of the gods on the bridegroom. After a few minutes the boy's mother, a very forceful woman with a mass of false hair curled up and up on the top of her head (she was said to be an incarnation of the god Mahadeo), declared to my face that it was the camera that had troubled her son. There was nothing to be done. The atmosphere was ruined. After that, even though I put the camera away, whenever people saw me they looked embarrassed and awkward. I felt as though I had indeed a black monkey sitting on my back.

Once when I was touring among the Bison-Horn Marias in the beautiful mountains of south Bastar I had with infinite trouble arranged to take a photograph of boys and girls fishing in a river. As always, of course, the people had first of all declared that they did not know what fish were. Then, when they had gone so far as to admit that there were fish, they said

they never actually caught any of them (they probably thought that I was making an inquiry to take their fishing rights from them—a thing which has been done in some parts of India). Then they said they had no fish-traps and we had to go and search for them in the village. When at last we got the boys and girls, carrying their traps down to the river bank, a sinister-looking old man appeared and said something in a loud voice. Immediately, before you could count ten, the place was deserted. Everybody disappeared into the jungle, leaving the traps and fishing-tackle on the ground. I then discovered that the old gentleman was the village priest and had announced that it had been revealed to him by the gods that anyone who allowed himself to be photographed would die forthwith.

I dealt with this by making the priest himself pose for his photograph. At first he presented a large and obstinate back, but I ultimately made him face me, and so was able to declare that if anybody was going to die he would be the first. I then showed the villagers photographs of the Maharaja and my own wife and myself and pointed out that we were all alive and happy in spite of the way our 'souls' were plastered on these bits of paper. On this occasion it was possible to make a certain impression and I shortly afterwards got an excellent picture of a cock-fight, the villagers presumably supposing that even if my lethal weapon did slaughter the cocks they could always eat them; but I was unable, with all our persuading, to recapture the same happy natural atmosphere which we had had before and which is, of course, essential to the making of a successful film.

Sometimes local subordinates or helpful friends can be equally embarrassing. Once in Sarangarh I had succeeded, with a lot of trouble, in getting a group of villagers natural and at ease, just ready for a good picture, when a zealous chaprasi rushed up exclaiming 'How dare you sit in that casual manner in front of the Sahib!'

I had similar experiences in NEFA, and among such highly photogenic people as the Boris and Wanchos I had to put my camera away entirely when I visited most of their villages. I never had any difficulty, however, among the Buddhist tribes along the frontier.

XIII

Composing books is one thing. Typing them out and getting them printed is quite another. Until I came to Shillong, except for a brief period, I never had a stenographer or typist and I myself typed out all my larger books. My practice was to type out a rough draft, then retype it again filling in the gaps and finally to make a fair copy. This involved an enormous amount of work but it was worth it, for I am convinced that you can do much better when you write yourself than when you dictate.

Then there is the business of proof-reading. My publisher, Roy Hawkins of the Oxford University Press, who undertook the profitless task of producing a whole series of my books during the war-years when paper was hard to obtain and printers were overburdened, used to tell me the way to read a proof before you sent your typescript to the printer. The Oxford Press impressed on me, among many other things, how careful you must be if you are going into print. What used to happen was that soon after I sent them a manuscript I would get a letter with a long list of queries. I have never been very good at spelling and the Press usually discovered that I had spelt words in different ways on different pages. Sometimes there were mistakes in grammar, sometimes in punctuation. When I began publishing I had the idea, so common among young authors, that somehow or other the printers would 'put it right'. I now learnt that, particularly in India, the printers would reproduce exactly what they saw in the text. Many compositors, in fact, do not know English but are simply trained to follow their copy exactly.

Then proofs would come and go; I would read them two or three times; the office of the Press would also read them; and finally Hawkins himself reads, I believe, every book he publishes at the final stage before it is struck off.

Sometimes we had amusing problems, particularly when I wrote about more intimate matters. There was one compositor, clearly suffering from a little complex about it, who, whenever the word 'sex' came in my manuscript, set it upside down. Nearly all compositors, I found, set up the expression 'public hairs', which is one of the curious things anthropologists some-

times write about, but this is, of course, exactly what they are not. When my book on the Murias was half ready there was a crisis because the mission press which was doing it suddenly realized what it was about and wrote to say that they could not possibly print such a shocking work. Hawkins, however, was firm and told them that they should have read the typescript before accepting the contract. Fortunately, the manager of the press was an exceptionally liberal Baptist and he himself thought the whole business rather funny. I estimated that by the time we finished, the Oxford Press and I between us read the proofs of this book no fewer than eight times, with the gratifying result that in three-quarters of a million words only three misprints have been found, an achievement to which the Baptist Mission Press of Calcutta notably contributed.

7

The Earth is Round

Ceaseless travel meant continual meetings. One day Pierre Teilhard came across a friend in some remote corner of the globe. He greeted him so warmly that the other expressed mild surprise. 'Why am I so happy?' said the traveller, 'Why, because the earth is round.' —Claude Aragonnès

I

IN the twenty-two years of forest life before I came to Shillong, I tended, I think, to isolate myself a little too much from the outside world. I dodged conferences and committees, though I corresponded fairly widely with other scholars in the same field. I did, however, go fairly regularly to Bombay, once a year in the rains, in order to raise funds for our tribal work and, as I love travelling, I made a few trips abroad. People in Bombay were extraordinarily generous and kind and I had a large number of friends there, chief of whom was Jehangir Patel.

J. P. Patel is a Mr Pickwick of a man. When I first met him he was a businessman beginning to do well in cotton. Then he came in touch with Gandhi and entertained him in Juhu after one of his fasts. Later, not content with helping us in our work in Patangarh, he started an admirable institution for the very oppressed Warlis in the Thana district. He organized a number of Forest Cooperatives and opened dispensaries and schools. He finally crowned his achievements by marrying Sophie, a Spanish lady, whom one day he brought home in triumph to Bombay. During the past fifteen years he has helped me in every possible way to collect funds for Patangarh, to publish my books, and to introduce me to a wide circle of

friends. His sane and wise advice has always stood me in good stead.

Perhaps my earliest friends in Bombay were the Macleans, who had a house in the Gowalia Tank Road where I used to stay in the Christa Seva Sangh days. John Maclean was a professor of mathematics at the Wilson College, and he and his wife kept open house for Indians: they were both strongly sympathetic to the national movement. Another missionary friend was the late Margaret Moore, a devout but very witty woman: years afterwards she paid us a visit at Karanjia and enjoyed it.

The Inter-Religious Fellowship often met in the Macleans' house, and here I got to know C. J. Shah, who produced a fine history of Jainism but later went into business. He accompanied me on my mission of inquiry in Gujarat, and we have now been friends for over thirty years.

After going to Karanjia I came to know the Davids: Meyer the eldest; Wilfrid who wrote the sensational *Monsoon* and stayed some days with us in Karanjia; the lovely and always entertaining Florence, and their mother Mrs David herself. Like the other old Jewish families I have known intimately, they were generous and hospitable to a fault, and gave us a great deal of support and encouragement in those early days.

Bombay is for me a place of many friendly memories, and I had contacts of very varied kinds. Among the politicians were M. R. Jayakar, a great lawyer and orator: Bhulabhai Desai, of whom I was very fond; K. F. Nariman, Purshottamdas Tricumdas, B. G. Kher and others. Among journalists were D. F. Karaka with whom I had Oxford ties; Shamlal of the *Times of India*; Shaun Mandy, the delightful Irishman who edited the *Illustrated Weekly of India* for many years; and above all Frank and Beryl Moraes. I have known Frank's son Dom since he was a baby and as he grew up he used to give me copies of his early poems.

I never went to Bombay without making a pilgrimage to Bandra to see Hilla Vakil. One of J. P. Patel's closest friends, whom he shared with me, is Wasant Velinkar, whose gift for humorous conversation makes him a joy to know.

There were many people connected with Bombay House and

the Tata enterprises in general, some of whom I have already mentioned. I have always had a special link with dear Pilloo Vesugar. I got to know Jamshed Bhabha and his wife Betty very well when I was working on the history of Jamshedpur, and other honoured friends are Jamshed's brother Homi, the nuclear energy expert, and K. A. D. Naoroji. Homi Mody, and the late Ardeshir Dalal; each took the chair at our annual meetings as did another old friend, M. C. Chagla. J. A. D. Naoroji, Soona Batliwalla and John Matthai were close friends whom death has taken from us.

For many years I have stayed during visits to Bombay with my publisher Roy Hawkins. An open-hearted and thoughtful host, an entertaining companion, he has always made a special appeal to me by his gifts as a listener. Too often, when I meet people, I can't get a word in edgewise, but Hawk not only leads one on with appropriate questions, but even listens to the answers. And, as a result perhaps of going through the proofs of so many of my books, he has become really interested in the tribes. His affection for me has even stood up to reading all the unfavourable reviews which, as publisher, he forwards to me, the worst passages carefully marked in red pencil. 'I like my friends to have plenty of faults,' he once told me, 'for then I don't feel oppressed by them.'

An earlier host was Evelyn Wood, a very old friend who has always had a cathartic effect, helping me to clear my mind of cant. His first wife Maeve did a drawing of me in 1942 which is reproduced in this book.

II

Later, I also had experience of life in Calcutta. Until 1946 anthropology was a subsection of the Zoological Survey of India—man prostrate at the feet of the other animals—and there was a Special Officer, Dr B. S. Guha, who worked as Anthropologist attached to the Survey. In that year, however, an Anthropological Survey (later to be known as the Department of Anthropology) was established by the Government of India and Guha became its first Director. He invited me to join him for

a time as Deputy Director to help to get it started. It was agreed that I should retain close relations with Patangarh where Shamrao would carry on, and accordingly I went to Banaras where the Survey was then stationed.

I lived in Banaras for over a year and had I not been able to go out frequently on tour in the tribal hills, I doubt if I could have stood it. The atmosphere was academic in the worst sense—there were quarrels and jealousies; very little work was done; Banaras Cantonment, where we lived, was devastatingly tedious—and it was a great relief when the Survey was shifted to Calcutta.

In Calcutta we got a pleasant flat at the top of a house in Park Street, No. 64. The Survey's office was in the Indian Museum in Chowringhee and conveniently near at hand. This was the first and only time in my life when I have gone physically from a house to an office. I spent just about a year in Calcutta with a good deal of time out on tour in the Bondo and Saora areas of Orissa, in South India and in Assam. At the end of my contract Guha was anxious for me to stay on but I was not happy in the atmosphere of the Department and I longed to return to the village. Two or three years later I was officially asked to return as Director but I still felt that this was not my job and everything that has happened since has convinced me that I was right.

Calcutta, however, gave me some lifelong friends. I have never had a friend quite like Victor Sassoon, affectionate, liberal, witty, a man of exceptional quality. He is the best of companions and brought a great enlargement into my life. It was due to him that I was able to see something of Europe and make two visits to Africa and it was due to him also that I was able, for once in my life, to eat good food while it was still possible to obtain it.

His brother Joe was another good friend and the beautiful house that the Sassoons owned in Middleton Street was almost an extra home to us.

Then there were Minnie and Lindsay Emmerson, association with whom has meant more and more to me as the years have passed. Ever since I knew him Lindsay has been on the staff of the *Statesman* newspaper (other special friends on this

paper are Desmond Doig and Niranjana Mazumder) and later, Minnie became Principal of the Bethune College; they have been my generous hosts on many occasions. They always have the latest books, the most recent information and the most amusing stories, and to go to their house is a treasured experience. Minnie's sister Sheila, the artist, and her husband John Auden (brother of W.H.) were other friends, and in Bombay there was another sister, the delightful Indira.

While we were in Calcutta Victor was running a picture agency which he called Tropix. He did the writing and Sunil Janah, whom I do not hesitate to call the greatest photographer in India, used to take the pictures. At that time Sunil was unmarried but later he was lucky enough to win the beautiful and talented Sobha. Then there were Jamini Roy, Gopal Ghose, Ratin Moitra and other artists, poets like Bishnu Dey and, above all, Sudhin Dutta, his wife Rajeshwari, and his charming brother Subul. Sudhin's comparatively early death (he was only fifty-nine) robbed India of a major poet and me of a precious friend.

During my year in Calcutta I became a member of the Council of the Asiatic Society (which was then called the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal) and was elected a Fellow, one of the most jealously guarded honours in the country. It brought me in contact with many Indian scholars, among whom I particularly treasure Suniti Chatterji, a unique character among India's learned men. I was also elected a Fellow of the National Institute of Sciences of India and was twice member of its Council.

Since coming to Shillong, I have often been to Calcutta but nearly always on my way somewhere else, with the result that my visits have been brief and overcrowded, with little chance to make new friends. But among the few I did make, the chief were Bob and Margot Gilkey and their lovely children, David, John and Sharada. Bob was in the *USIS*, a learned man (he has written, in French, a large treatise on comparative literature) with the kindest eyes you ever saw; and Margot, a shy and too-modest poet, has in addition to her gifts of heart and mind a breath-taking beauty. Lila and I stayed with them in their air-conditioned flat in Calcutta and they stayed with us and

completely won the children's hearts. But now they have gone away, as people in official positions always do.

III

At the end of April 1949 I said goodbye to the Department of Anthropology and a week later set off with Victor on a visit to Europe and Africa. We flew by Pan American to Brussels and then travelled about Europe (Paris, Venice, Rome) for a fortnight, finally reaching England, where I stayed with my mother and Eldyth for a couple of months. At the end of this time, at the beginning of August, Victor and I went to French West Africa (A O F).

The trip required elaborate preparations. Geoffrey Gorer gave us advice; Daryll Forde (a great charmer but with the habit, common to Africanists, of talking about cliteridectomy at the top of his voice in crowded restaurants) fixed us up. We studied photos at the International African Institute, read books at the Royal Anthropological Institute. Victor went over to Paris to see Professor Monod who agreed that his Institut Français d'Afrique Noire (IFAN) would give us every assistance, and obtained a gracious letter from Marcel Griaule who recommended the *érudit* Dr Elwin to the *bienveillante attention* of the Governor-General of the A O F. I myself got a rather cold letter from the British Colonial Office, asking the local officials to give 'whatever assistance may properly be afforded to you', should we go into 'British' Africa.

For some time we wondered if we would be able to go at all, but at last there was a copy of a document from the *Ministre de la France d'Outre-Mer* to say that our request had received *une suite favorable*.

We left London on August 1st for Paris, where the formalities went on and on, and four days later flew in a Skymaster, not one of my favourite aircraft, to Dakar and got seats (as we say in India) in a hotel at midnight. Here the IFAN people were very helpful; we interviewed Ministers, Commissioners and police. The British Consul, apart from his view that anthropologists were only interested in 'tits and temples', was kind.

From Dakar we went to the Haute Volta, flying to Bobo-Dioulasso in the heart of the bush, where we started our adventures.

We were late in arriving, and the sun was going down. It was drizzling a little. The airport was crowded with enthusiastic Frenchwomen in shorts and topis welcoming their husbands back from Dakar, and African chiefs greeting a party of Deputies on their way to Ouagadougou.

We stood drearily under a wing of the plane waiting for something to happen and at last we saw our baggage being piled into a decrepit bus with the words 'God is My Refuge' painted above the windscreen.

'I suppose we'd better get in,' said Victor, and so we did.

There was another pause, and then a young policeman approached and inquired our professions. He did not, I thought, seem altogether satisfied with the word *ethnologue*. He had no pencil, so I had to lend him mine and he went off with it.

There was another wait, but finally a handsome fellow in a deerstalker's cap shook us by the hand, climbed into the driver's seat and took off at a great pace towards the town.

After calling at an interminable number of places, where the driver appeared to have personal affairs to settle, the car stopped abruptly outside the Hôtel du Cercle, where we had wired for reservations. Our baggage was hastily dumped on the side of the road, the driver with a beaming smile shook hands all round, and drove off into the night.

The hotel was brightly lit and looked rather attractive. There was a large palm court in front of the building and waiters were busy setting out tables, for it had now ceased to rain. For the moment my spirits rose. But when we met the apple-cheeked proprietor, who might have come straight off a farm in the Médoc, he protested that he had never had any telegram about reservations. I suspect that even if he had it would have made little difference. For already we could see our fellow-passengers, most of whom had arrived long before in private cars, in full possession; the hotel had, I think, some contract with Air France to give priority accommodation whenever one of their planes was benighted, as it was that day.

There was not a room in the place, explained the proprietor. No, there were no other hotels. But it was the Feast of the Assumption; there would be dancing all night; and the *ethnologue anglais* and his party would be most welcome to dinner. Regard, he spread out his hands, what a *repas*, what *vins*, what an *ambiance*!

Our bags had by now been heaped into a small mountain under a tree to one side of the court. I could see nowhere to sit, so I put myself down on Victor's bedding and gazed mournfully at the gay scene, while Victor himself continued to protest in his most idiomatic French.

I sat on. Presently a small French child hugging a golliwog came up and stared at me in a most offensive manner, as if comparing me unfavourably with her toy. I was meditating a protest when fortunately a dog-fight broke out among the tables. Women screamed, bottles were upset, Victor jumped to safety on his chair.

In the end, we got rooms of a sort. Very fortunately, one of the Administrateurs Adjoints des Colonies was there, having an aperitif in honour of the Assumption, and overheard a reference to the Directeur-Général de l'Intérieur, for Victor—having failed with his Haut-Commissaire's letter—was firing off even his secondary armament in his despair. Monsieur Dubonnet, for such was the improbable name of this pleasant, capable if bullet-headed young official, soon had the matter settled. The entire hotel was rearranged and a room was put at our disposal.

Dinner, moreover, was not too bad. The *repas vin non compris* was only a hundred francs, and there were over forty *suppléments*. We made a fair meal of fish soup, braised tongue and ices. There were even *escargots* (one hundred francs) which I insisted on having, though I left most of them when I found they were tinned.

Such was our introduction to Bobo-Dioulasso. Next morning we were up early and went out to try and make arrangements. Just outside our door two of the hotel servants were engaged in skinning a monkey, which must have died of some nameless disease during the night. They grinned at me as I went past, but fortunately did not offer to shake hands. After a breakfast of lukewarm coffee and rolls, Victor and I walked down one of

the long red streets—rather pretty with flowers growing everywhere—towards the shops.

After a lot of palaver, we were able to make a programme, hire a car, and set out to explore.

Our first destination was Gaoua, a small town some two hundred kilometres along a road *en bon état* from Bobo-Dioulasso, which is the centre of a district which the guide-book describes as *région très accidentée*, and specially interesting for *le particularisme de ses habitants*. We left, fairly early, in two cars—a large station-wagon and a jeep. The drive through the bush was, frankly, rather dull.

The road went on and on and on, through a green desert of low trees and thorny shrubs. There were very few people about, and we saw no animals. Sometimes there was a sudden activity of people assembling for a bazaar, women tramping along in file, great strapping creatures, many of them, their height accentuated by piles of baskets on their heads.

An occasional scarlet bird flickered and flaunted its beauty across the way.

From time to time we would pass a village; the car would stop and we would tumble out to have a look. The mud houses, built like fortresses in the middle of their fields, were impressive. The lines of battlements appeared as rocks rising above a green sea of vegetation.

In this way we spent a week visiting some delightful Bobos, a Dian village, saw Fulanis tending cattle and at a place called Coule had our first sight of the extraordinary *Lobi femmes aux plateaux* who at first seemed the most unsightly women we had ever seen, though it was strange how quickly we got used to them.

We returned to Bobo-Dioulasso and left for Abidjan on the Ivory Coast by train. With our memories of the Blue Train and the Grands Express of France and impressed by the sonorous name of the railway company, we had been looking forward to comfort if not luxury. In fact la Compagnie Internationale des Wagons-Lits et des Grands Express Européens had arranged for us wooden benches, four to a compartment, with straw mattresses and very narrow straw pillows. They had covered the windows with a thick gauze to keep out the showers of sparks

which blew in from the wood fire of the engine. This also protected the passengers from any inconvenient *courant d'air* and indeed from any air at all. They had provided one lavatory for the entire bogie, and this was small and dirty; when I turned the single tap not a drop of water came out.

A train in Africa is less a means of locomotion than a great slowly-moving bazaar. At every wayside station there was a long halt. Peasants crowded round with flocks of goats, baskets of eggs, headloads of yams, calabashes of rice-beer. The more enterprising railway servants and many of the third-class passengers bought these things in large quantities to resell at a profit on the coast, and when their own compartments were full, piled them up in the first-class corridor. There was a great deal of handshaking everywhere. At each station the staff drank a little beer, with the result that by nightfall the train was proceeding in a most unusual manner. Sometimes it would go so slowly that you thought it was going to stop; then suddenly it would wake up and presently be pounding along at a tremendous rate, the furnace erupting clouds of fiery particles. Then, with loud cries of excitement, the brakemen would rush at wheels fixed at the rear of each coach, and turn them excitedly until the train slowed a little.

But the highlight of our expedition was our visit to French Togo to which we had been attracted by Geoffrey Gorer, who had been there in 1933. He had told us that the Cabrais were the only group of 'uncivilized' Africans he had met who were not mad. We flew from Abidjan to Lomé, the pretty little capital on the coast, and then worked our way north. Togo is a long slender finger poked into the ribs of Africa and our destination was somewhere near the base of the nail, the hill country where the Cabrais had their villages. On the way we visited the Konkombas and at Sara, where for once we got a comfortable Chief's house to live in, we had a wonderful time with attractive and friendly people and a dance, lasting all night, which I shall never forget.

We had an interesting, and exciting, journey, up and away from the coast. It was a sort of geographical striptease, for the people wore fewer and fewer clothes as we went north. We passed through lovely wooded country and were greeted all

along the road by smiling men and women who raised their hands in salute. We were told that they raised an open hand to show that they held no weapons.

Finally we reached Lama Kara where M. Pierre Aubanel, the Commandant de Cercle, was very good to us and made some admirable arrangements. These were necessary, for we proposed to walk and did walk right across the Cabrai hills just as if we had been in India. Our first two or three villages were dull and sophisticated and we began by cursing Geoffrey for misleading us. But once we were in the heart of the country we found something that I had never found before, entirely fascinating.

The Cabrais are good cultivators and build excellent houses which are kept as clean as their own attractive persons. When we were there, there was still a great deal of disease in the country, especially goitre, umbilical hernia and sleeping-sickness. But many of the people were fine specimens of humanity. The Chiefs and other important gentlemen were rather overdressed but the others (and especially the beautiful younger ones) lived at this time completely naked; even the Catholic girls had nothing but a crucifix pendant between their splendid breasts. Some of the men had bought bowler hats which an enterprising French businessman had imported and they looked very quaint with them and nothing else. One day I met an old man dressed in nothing except a beard and a large sun-hat. He swept it off and bowed with a gesture worthy of a Marquis, saying 'Bonjour, Monsieur'.

I think what most impressed me was the mental freedom of the Cabrais who, as Gorer pointed out long ago, had very little religion and were not haunted by the fear of their dead ancestors. They were also free of shyness and prudery and gave one an unusual sense of innocence. In each village Victor and I used to be given separate mud cabins and lovely creatures 'naked as cows' would come in at any time, day or night, and sit beside us with no trace of self-consciousness. Gorer says that 'women enjoy great sexual licence' and the men are 'much addicted to pederasty'. Neither Victor nor I saw any sign of this: perhaps we were so preoccupied with preserving our own virtue that our powers of observation were weakened. I think

that Gorer was speaking of a rather different area, for he did not go, as we did, into the deep interior.

There were two special villages, Phauda and Aneida, in each of which we spent several days and I shall never forget them. I had several attacks of malaria and a bad throat most of the time but even these could not take away the excitement and pleasure of this wonderful visit.

Victor took some of the best photographs that he has ever made and a number of them were later reproduced in the *Geographical Magazine*.

Then, finally, with regret, we left the country of this happy, uninhibited and carefree people and went down to the coast whence we went by boat to Dahomey, and from there by car to Lagos.

Our departure from Lomé was sensational.

On the pier stood a row of curious wooden seats, rather like those in which one sits when one is rash enough to ascend a giant wheel at an English fair. An official motioned to us to put ourselves and our baggage into one of them, and we did so.

Suddenly with a shrill blast on its siren and a shrieking of rusty machinery a crane leapt into life. A great hook descended above us out of the darkness; with shouts of excitement our porters jumped for it and attached it to an iron bar which was fixed to our seat; there was another blast on the siren, and we were swung up and out over the dark Atlantic forty feet below.

At this moment all the lights went out.

There seemed to be some kind of boat beneath us, for harsh cries in an unknown language came up from the depths. But we could see nothing, and remained swinging to and fro.

After five or six minutes the lights came on. The siren screamed, and we went down towards the sea and hit the deck of a small boat tossing and heaving on the rollers with such force that all the lights went out again.

This time they stayed out for half an hour.

The waves seemed enormous and our little boat stood alternately on head and tail. I should have been very sick indeed had I not been so anxious.

'Good god! What's that?' suddenly exclaimed Victor, clutching me by the arm.

Out of the darkness a boat piled high with cases of copra appeared almost on top of us. I shut my eyes. A collision seemed inevitable. Everybody shouted at once, our boatmen leapt to their feet and with their oars just managed to fend off the intruder, which vanished into the night as suddenly as it had come.

When the lights did at last come on, another mammy chair (as these abominable contraptions are called) came down into our boat. This one contained a ship's officer and two almost hysterical French girls who had been ashore for a few hours. A steam launch fussed up beside us, a rope was slung, and we were tugged at a rapid speed out into the Atlantic.

Our boat heaved and swayed, clouds of spray broke over us, the ship's officer chattered, the girls screamed, Victor and I, green of face and sick with apprehension, clung to our seats.

At last we saw the great sides of the liner looming up before us, and we were pulled round to a point where high above us on a brightly-lighted deck we could see its cranes. But we were not to be released yet. It was rougher out here, and there were perhaps a score of other boats clattering and banging against the liner's side. An exceptionally big wave lifted them up and it seemed that they must inevitably crash down upon us. It was a terrifying sight, this mass of crude wooden boats with their gesticulating shouting crews lifted above our heads and ourselves in the trough of a swirling mass of water.

But at last we saw to our joy a hook descending. To my annoyance our boatmen sent the other chair up first, though in view of the fact that we had been in the boat for at least half an hour longer, we should have had priority. But the hook came down again and we were drawn up to lights and a steady deck.

Then we were very comfortable—a good cabin, French food, wine. But the mammy chairs were not easily forgotten.

In British Nigeria things were done much better: the roads were straighter, the hospitals bigger, the schools cleaner, but by comparison it was cold. There was no handshaking: it was no longer French.

After a few days in Lagos, we flew back to Paris, and thence direct to Calcutta and home to Patangarh.

IV

Our visit to French West Africa had one serious drawback, that I was unable to get, anywhere, a cup of tea.

The shops and hotels all over that great area had only the vaguest idea of what it was. In place of the reviving and 'wink-tipping cordial' to which long habit had attached me, I was given messy cups of bad coffee. At last, after several frustrated weeks, in the great market of Lomé in Togoland, I found a very fly-blown packet of the divine leaves tucked away between one stall selling the impedimenta of black magic and another stocked with chamber-pots. It was then that I realized Dr Johnson's devotion to 'the infusion of this fascinating plant', 'whose kettle has scarcely time to cool; who with tea amuses the evening, with tea solaces the midnight, and with tea welcomes the morning'.

Tea, and to a less extent coffee, is the background. But there is also food.

I am perfectly content, really content, with the simplest Indian vegetarian food—it is hard to beat a plain dish of well-cooked pulse and rice—and in Patangarh my menu was often a simple *mélange* of:

Riz pardhan
Plat de lentilles Esäü
Poulet au safran à la façon de Patangarh
Purée de légumes forestière

At the same time I am greatly attracted to the more elaborate and exotic foods, though I hardly ever get them. In India I like Gujarati vegetarian food best of all, such as I had from Anasuya Behn over thirty years ago. And another hostess of whose dishes I would say

Art could not feign more simple grace
 Nor Nature take a line away

is Indira Luthra.

My knowledge of other kinds of food is inseparably associated with Victor Sassoon. I had long wanted to eat a meal at the Tour d'Argent with its view of Nôtre-Dame in Paris, for although A. E. Housman thought the cooking at the Café de

Paris was better, he had a great opinion of its *Canard à la presse*, and they had devised a dish, *Barbue Housman*—fish cooked with cheese and served with new potatoes, very small—in his honour. Victor took me there on a lovely May morning. The maître d'hôtel had never heard of *Barbue Housman*, so instead we began with a little smoked salmon, went on to the *Canard au sang* (No. 199549) and ended up with some artichoke bottoms, the whole washed down by an aristocratic Montrachet.

During those days with Victor, I ate my way across Europe and even French Africa, where we were able to get wonderful brandy in little shops far away in the bush and many simple but exquisite French meals. We did not aim at the highest flights but for the only time in my life I had things which I have never forgotten. One of our most memorable meals was, unexpectedly, in Brussels at a little place in the Rue de la Violette called L'Ecu de France, where much of our enjoyment was due to a very human and competent waiter. He brought us *Escargots de Bourgogne*, followed by cold lobster and *Coq au vin de Savigny*, and ended up by setting fire to our *Crêpes flambées* with quite reckless contributions of Grand Marnier.

Another admirable lunch—I greatly prefer lunches to dinners—was at Lugano: *Nouillettes à l'oeuf au beurre* with *sauce bolognaise* and *Fraises des bois Romanoff*. Another day we had cold artichokes, with *sauce Gribiche*, which were delicious.

In Venice and Rome, we fed well but not exceptionally. For the best Italian food I have ever tasted I had to wait for Shillong and beautiful Inez (wife of our very special friend Jiten Ghosh), who used to give us a *ravioli*, with all the trimmings, which had to be tasted to be believed.

We naturally let ourselves go in Paris. I had first visited the Reine Pédaque fifteen years before with the novelist Wilfrid David and Shamrao; now Victor and I had a good but rather unbalanced lunch, stupidly not accepting the maître d'hôtel's advice to take the famous *Coq au vin au Château de Corton André*. Instead we had

Champignons sautés à la Bordelaise
Truite sautée fines herbes
Rognons de veau flambés Reine Pédaque.

In Montmartre we found the delightful Auberge du Sanglier Bleu, whose grilled lamb chops took one into another world, and to whose lobster soup we returned more than once.

I also liked the Restaurant de l'Escargot, of whose *menu très soigné* the first prize goes to the snails which give it its name.

However, I can manage with perfectly simple dishes. If it were to be my last meal on earth I would start with a dish of *escargots* with a *sauce vinaigrette*, go on to a dozen oysters, some asparagus with *sauce hollandaise* and end up with *crêpes Suzette*. It is no good thinking of the wine, for there probably wouldn't be any in India by then.

And afterwards, when it is all over, I agree with Sydney Smith who once said that his idea of heaven was 'eating *pâté de foie gras* to the sound of trumpets'.

I may sum it all up by going back twenty years to Patangarh, where our very rustic cook one day startled us by announcing a 'Buttocks Savoury' for supper. He was very proud of the few English dishes he knew and by 'buttocks' he probably meant *batak* or duck. Another day there was a discussion in the village as to what kind of *sahib* I was. The Commissioner had recently visited us. There was no doubt about him—he was a *pakka sahib*. A minor Indian official had also been—he was a *dal-bhat sahib*. But what was I? Our cook solved the riddle. 'He is a *savoury sahib*,' he declared.

V

In the following year Victor and I went again to Africa, this time with the idea of visiting the Belgian Congo and French Equatorial Africa. We went by boat to Mombasa which I did not enjoy, for if air-travel inspires me with the fear of death, sea-travel fills me with the desire for it. We went up to Nairobi and were just making our arrangements to go into the heart of Africa, when I developed gall-bladder trouble and the specialist we consulted said it would be dangerous for me to go into the wilds remote from the possibility of medical attention. This meant that we had to rearrange our programme, though Victor in the end did go to AEF and saw something of the Congo, for

which I have always envied him. We spent some time based on Nairobi where there was an old friend, Dr L. S. B. Leakey, with whom I had grown up as a little boy, for both he and I are renegade sons of pious missionary parents. He enabled us to see something of the Kikuyu and Masai. The Mau-Mau movement had not yet begun but the British residents were busily digging the foundations of their own destruction and we could already feel the growing tension.

We then made a quick visit to Tanganyika where we stayed at Arusha and Moshi below Kilimanjaro. In a place called Voi we saw the usual animals and went up into the Teista hills to see something of the people. At Mzima Springs we were charged by an enraged female hippopotamus.

After this we flew to Entebbe and thus to Kampala. We liked Uganda best of all, for racial distinctions were much weaker there, and we were fortunate in being able to hire a good car with a first-rate African driver. In this we drove up to the north of Gulu, went boating on the Nile and during our wanderings saw something of the Acholis and Lugbaras. We actually went for two hours into the Belgian Congo, after an incredible lot of fuss about passports and permits, characteristic of the impenetrable hinterlands of red-tape everywhere, and had lunch there.

'Africans dance,' says Geoffrey Gorer, in his classical book on the subject. 'They dance for joy, and they dance for grief; they dance for love and they dance for hate; they dance to avert calamity; they dance for religion and they dance to pass the time.'

But even in 1950 African dancing had become sporadic. There were still areas—East as well as West—where these words of Gorer were true. There were many other parts where they were already out of date, where a change of religion, or a general economic and cultural malaise had robbed the people of their passion for the dance. Nor was it always easy to witness a dance in Africa: you had to be at the right season, find the people in the mood, above all you must not be in a hurry.

As we drove north through the pleasant fertile country of Uganda, we at last reached the Acholi district which extends almost to the Sudan border. The Acholis are a Nilotic people,

who at one time were distinguished by their beautiful head-dress and clothes of leopard skin ; today, however, many of them have adopted the outward garb of civilization.

On our way back to Kampala we found ourselves one warm midday at a little town called Atiak. Here were a few Indian shops, and to our surprise and delight we were received and most hospitably entertained by a Gujarati family. It is astonishing how the Indian merchants of East Africa have penetrated to the remotest places, and with what enterprise and courage they ply their trade. Their importance is indicated by the fact that East African bank-notes are printed in Gujarati as well as English. After a delicious lunch of *puris*, mango chutney and other delicacies, the thunder of drums outside proclaimed that the Acholis had assembled for a dance.

This dance was one of the most splendid and exciting that I have ever seen—and for thirty years I have been watching and recording tribal dances. It roused in me the same feeling of delight that I have had when witnessing a Naga war dance or a Bison-Horn Maria wedding dance. Imagine a vast crowd of shining glistening bodies of a beautiful jet black gyrating, gesticulating, now moving in ordered rhythm, now breaking into individual ecstasy, stamping, thumping, jumping with enormous enthusiasm and zest. That is, I think, the first thing that strikes the onlooker about an African dance—its zest.

To these people a dance is not just an extra, a luxury to be indulged in or not as one feels inclined ; where it has remained, it is an essential force in life, as natural as breathing or eating, and always done with passionate delight. The Acholi dancers never smiled ; they were too intent, too keyed up ; they were at serious business, they were entranced.

The dancers entered the field in a succession of processions, leaping and dancing like war-horses. They moved roughly round a tall pole, but they did not observe any special order, and indeed the area soon became so congested with hundreds of dancers that it began to resemble the dance-floor of a popular Parisian cabaret. Unhappily very few of the people were dressed in traditional style, but some had the old headdresses of feathers, and most of the men had a curious label attached to

their bottoms, on which they inscribed their initials or some such caption as H E, A D C, and in one striking case, U S A.

To witness a dance such as the one we saw at Atiak was to realize the deep elemental power of Africa, its capacity for enjoyment and display, its overmastering love of rhythm. 'The discovery of the dark races,' said Karen Blixen, 'was to me a magnificent enlargement of all my world,' and anyone who is not blinded by prejudice will agree with her.

There are, in fact, two ways of seeing the African villagers at their best—at a dance and at a market. The great markets of Africa are still exciting spectacles, where every stage of civilization, every degree of economic progress meet and mingle.

On the eastern boundaries of the Belgian Congo lies the West Nile district of Uganda, a remote and lovely part of the world, with its astonishing variety of big game and its friendly, almost bewitching people. Here lives the large and comparatively prosperous tribe of the Lugbaras. There are about two lakhs of them and they are reckoned to be some of the best cultivators in Africa. That means they have money to spend in their markets.

Thirty years ago most of them went entirely naked, but today the men wear clothes, often rather regrettable European clothes, and the women dress in leaves for the most part, though some have begun to put on skirts and blouses. This means that there are things they want to buy.

I visited three great markets in a single morning. Under the lovely flowering trees—the Uganda tulip with its glorious red tubular blossoms, the yellow cassia, a beautiful acacia with fluffy spikes—was a sea of black bodies, diversified by vivid splashes of colour: gay silk turbans, bright wimples round the head, flowers in the hair, strings of variegated beads. To me black is a lovely colour, and when it shines and dances in the sun, and is set off by the bright reds and greens and blues of art or nature, I find it entrancing.

Each market had a great fenced-in enclosure and there was a small entrance fee. Inside, it was hardly possible to move. On every side groups of chattering people sat on the ground beside their wares, and the wares were as varied as the people who sold them—mats, baskets, pots, grindstones, food (raw and

cooked), fruit, ornaments, tobacco, sugarcane, beer (these happy people can make beer out of almost anything; there is honey-beer and banana-beer). It was in a way—except for the beer—much like an Indian bazaar out in the mofussil. There was a lot of trade by barter, but money was used and I did not see the cowries which are common in French West Africa.

The most memorable thing to my mind about those Lugbara markets was their friendliness. Beaming smiles greeted me everywhere, and for once I found people clamouring to be photographed and I had to pretend to take many pictures which never actually went on to the film!

There is a great potential store of friendliness and goodwill in Africa, but there is hate there too—and one of the great factors of the world-peace of the future will be whether goodwill or hate prevails.

VI

I was invited to visit Ceylon by Suzanne Karpeles and G. P. Malalasekara and spent an exciting and profitable three weeks there. I got landed in rather a lot of public appearances and have never received so much attention from the newspapers. I held an exhibition of my photographs which was visited by over a thousand people, which was not bad for Colombo, and lectured at the University, the Royal Asiatic Society, Young Men's Buddhist Association and so on. I also made three expeditions. The first was with Suzanne and the Director of Archaeology in Ceylon, a most learned person, S. Paravatana. We went to all the right places, to Sigiriya, Dambulla and Anuradhapura, but of all the ancient cities we visited, the one that stirred me most was Mihintale. I had, of course, visited northern Ceylon before but it was on this occasion that the impact of the old Buddhism hit me most strongly.

Then I made another excursion with Dr R. L. Spittel, a very old resident of Colombo and an authority, perhaps the only living authority, on the Veddas, whom I had long wanted to see. He took me out into the wilds, to two of the only remaining primitive Vedda settlements, and it was an experience of

a quite different flavour to any I have had either in India or in Africa. I had no idea, of course, of telling the Ceylon Government their business but the reporters were so persistent that I did express myself rather strongly on the lack of attention paid to the Veddas who were completely neglected. My remarks had their effect and Dick Spittel wrote to me after I left: 'Believe me, your comments in the press stirred the hearts of our Ministers. They felt the sting pretty badly, as more than one of them confessed to me. I have now drawn up, at their request, a Vedda Welfare Scheme, with a V. W. Officer and V. W. Advisory Committee and suggested as an immediate necessity, that the Pollebedde folk at least should have food rations and guns. *Mirabile dictu*—this has already been put into effect. You can well picture the result on some of those sad starved faces you saw.

I believe that Spittel himself was finally appointed Adviser for the Veddas to the Ceylon Government.

My third trip was with my old Oxford friend Bernard Aluwihare. He took me out to Matale where he had a house right up in the hills in very beautiful surroundings, and I paid a visit to what was in some ways the family temple, a superb shrine cut in the rock and decorated with many paintings.

VII

Probably of all my visits abroad the most exciting was to Thailand. When I was at Oxford there was a boy, somewhat junior to me, at University College, called Arthur Braine-Hartnell. He was a poet and created an atmosphere about himself that very few could equal. He was a dear, excessive person and, when he died recently at the age of 56, I was very sad about it. I often used to go to his rooms to drink beer and he told me long afterwards that I met Graham Greene, Evelyn Waugh and W. H. Auden there. The trouble was, of course, that when I met them (if I really did) they were just intelligent young men. They had not yet become what they are now. But Harold Acton was already a vivid and original personality.

Later B.-H. migrated to Thailand and became a professor in

the University. Something recalled me to his recollection and he wrote to invite me to stay with him in Bangkok, and Shamrao and I had a wonderful month there and in the north.

A great deal has been written about Thailand and a good guide-book will really tell the reader most of what we saw. We looked at temples till our eyes bubbled and I took some remarkably successful photographs, particularly one of Wat Arun with three aircraft flying round the spire in formation, a picture one might get once in a thousand years.

Unfortunately, I wrote very little about this visit while it was fresh in my mind, just a few articles for newspapers. I did what I could to meet Thai scholars and visited their Asiatic Society. But actually we were there on holiday and Thailand is a place where you can have a real holiday. There is nothing here to excite your idealism. In Africa there was the race problem to make you miserable. In Ceylon there were the neglected Veddas. In India, of course, one has no rest. But in Thailand I felt that we were with a people who were perfectly adjusted to their setting and that even where they had wrongs they were so happy that they could forget them.

We stayed for some days with Braine-Hartnell and then moved to the Norfolk Hotel. There we met a remarkable English lawyer who had been President of the Cambridge Union and Legal Adviser to the Thai Government, Gerald Sparrow, who was extraordinarily good to Shamrao and myself.

One great thing he did for us was to take us to Chiangmai in the north and provide a car for us to get about. Chiangmai is a striking contrast to Bangkok. Where that is crowded, this is comparatively open. The people, who have much Lao and Burmese blood, are fairer of complexion and even more charming in manner than the southerners. The temples are built in a different style; they are less elaborate, less gaudy, yet with a dignity and beauty all their own. The climate is better, considerably cooler than Bangkok, and roses—which do not succeed in the capital—grow here to a wonderful size and colour.

Gerald took us fifty miles to the north to a little monastery hidden under a great hill whose jagged fingers of rock pointed to the sky. This was Chiang Dao, one of the most peaceful and

romantic spots I have ever visited. There is a great cave thronged with silent images, and many little pagodas built on the rocks; some of them look down on a pond full of fishes which are fed by the gentle monks. It was delightful to drive here through the fields where the peasants were gathering the rice-harvest; Siam is so full of water that they often transport their crops by boat instead of by bullock-cart, and most of their houses are built up on piles to avoid the universal damp. The people looked picturesque in their blue dresses with large straw sun-hats.

Siamese religion owes a great deal to India. The story of the Ramayana (with not a little of its piety extracted) has been a universal inspiration to architecture, sculpture, woodwork and mural paintings, and it has dominated the theatre. Court terminology, dress and festivals also owe much to Indian tradition. But religion is less obvious in Siam than in India; it does not go so deep, it is less fanatical, it is not so strong a factor in public life.

An American anthropologist, J. F. Embree, once compared Thai culture with that of Japan and Vietnam, and suggested that while the social structure of Japan and Vietnam is 'close'—that is, the behaviour of the people conforms closely to the formal social patterns of human relations—that of Siam is very loosely woven. The Thais are individualists, and Embree speaks of the 'almost determined lack of regularity, discipline and regimentation' in their ordinary life. There is little respect for administrative regularity and no industrial time-sense. While the Japanese regard work as a virtue, and the Chinese accept it as a rule, the Thais do not consider it to be a thing good in itself. And this temperamental attitude shows itself in Thai religion. The chief end of Siamese Buddhism is happiness. One of the first things I was asked by a Thai friend in Chiangmai was: 'Are you happy?' To a visitor from India, where we do not think about happiness very often and certainly do not use it as a yardstick of success, the question came as a shock, a very pleasant shock. Not 'Are you well?' or 'Are you good?' or 'Are you making money or getting promotion?' but 'Are you happy?' There is a Siamese word *sunuk*, which means something pleasant, absorbing, delightful, tolerant—it is one of the primary values. It is *sunuk* to travel hopefully, *sunuk* to enjoy

a game or a dance or someone's company. Buddhism is *sunuk*: other religions are a little dull. It is said that the Siamese respect those who can make them laugh; to make a Siamese like you, you must make him feel happy.

Of all the places I visited in the happy land of Siam, Chieng-mai was the most *sunuk*.

I have mentioned the poor murdered Bella Wright who, though I never saw her, had such an influence on my life. Rather similar was the lovely Rada, the Siamese girl with whom I spent rapturous days in Chiengmai. She had been educated in America, spoke English 'slowly and easily', with a trace of the accent found among 'the very smart young ladies who had been to the most exclusive finishing schools in the States or in Paris'. We ate sucking-pig together and drank Black Label. One evening she did a superb lampoon on American and Siamese dancing and I declared, 'I did not know men could be so happy.' But at last we had to part. 'Most reluctantly we waved farewell to our lovely and gifted Rada. As we became air-borne, we saw her waving a little lace handkerchief until we were out of sight.' How wonderful it was and that little lace handkerchief still tears my heart. Gerald Sparrow tells you all about it in his *Land of the Moonflower*.

The only trouble is that Rada never existed. Gerald invented the whole thing to make me more interesting. It never, I am sure, occurred to him that the story might go, as it did, to a high level in the Government of India with the suggestion that I was not very nice to know. Gerald was genuinely fond of me as I was of him and, in fact, he did me proud in this book: 'Verrier was as untidy and as delightful as ever, a genial bear of a man, with long hair, searching eyes and a gentle voice . . . a great man, judged by any standards other than mercenary ones . . . a saint, not a pale historical saint reeking of purity and unction, but a modern saint, fallible and human, yet with an infinite compassion.' You can't be cross with someone who says such nice things about you.

But what are we to do with Rada? For hundreds of readers she exists as firmly as any other historical character we know only from books. She is part of my own life now. Dear Rada, how nice it would have been . . .

One result of our visit was that I wrote such enthusiastic letters to Victor about Thailand that he left India for good and went to live in Bangkok where he was appointed to a professorship of English in the University.

VIII

Since 1928 I have been to Europe four times, staying on each occasion for about two months. Eight months in thirty-four years is not very long, and the result has been that my links with Oxford have been impaired, old friends have fallen into neglect, but worst of all, it meant that I inevitably neglected my mother (though I wrote to her every week without fail) who died a few years ago at the age of 89.

But there were some friends with whom I never lost touch. Closest of these was the late Laurence Housman who gave me a lot of help when I was working for Gandhi in the early years. Later, just before the Second World War, he invited Shamrao and me to England and made the visit financially possible. I carried on an animated correspondence with him for many years.

Laurence was a strong pacifist, an admirer of Gandhi, and at the end of his life joined the Society of Friends, in which, he told me, he had the only religious comfort that was left for him. Blake's poem 'The Divine Image' stated the whole of his religious beliefs. He had, he said, 'become very anti-theological'.

In the last letter I had from him, written shortly before his death, he wrote:

I am almost in despair about the world's future. Our acceptance of War as a remedy for wrong has produced the Hydrogen Bomb which, if we stumble into another World War, will mean suicide and extinction for friend and foe alike. . . . There is no one in the political world whom I can put much trust in—except Nehru who, to my mind, is the greatest man alive. I hope you love him.

During all these years my sister Eldyth had been living with mother and, though she would never admit it, losing much of

what life had to give in consequence. I have never met anyone so completely unselfish as Eldyth. Her whole life has been devoted to other people. Fortunately, even when mother was alive, since they lived in or near London, she was able to find interesting work as one of the Secretaries of the Church Missionary Society, a job she has now been doing for many years. Eldyth visited us in Patangarh in 1939 just before the War, and again spent a very happy two months with us in Shillong during an official tour which took her all over India visiting mission stations and hospitals.

In her own person, Eldyth illustrates one of Gandhi's sayings: 'True love is boundless like the ocean and, rising and swelling within one, spreads itself out and crossing all boundaries and frontiers envelops the whole world.'

Basil became a schoolmaster and for some time taught at the famous Cheam School, where one of his pupils was a boy who was later to become the Duke of Edinburgh. Since then he has taught at two or three other schools. He married an outstandingly beautiful girl called Helen; they now have three children who are, I am told, enchanting though I have only seen one of them and that when she was a baby. I have seen little of Basil and we seldom write, but I feel very close to him, for he is a man after my own heart and, when we do meet, we get on exceptionally well together.

8

Passage to NEFA

*Great things are done when Men and Mountains meet ;
This is not done by Jostling in the Street.*

—William Blake

I

THE years of research in Bastar and Orissa were happy and rewarding. Yet for a long time I had been thinking of Assam and Dr J. H. Hutton wrote me a detailed letter far back in the early forties about the possibilities of research there. In June 1947, just before Independence, Bill Archer, who had been transferred from Bihar to the Naga Hills, invited me to visit him at Mokokchung. He told me to come to a station called Nakachari and said that he would send someone to meet me. Bill, of course, is a poet and did not think of telling me where Mokokchung was.

Accordingly Shamrao and I set out by road and rail—the air service was not yet operating—on the long journey to Assam. The heat was almost Promethean. After some days of constant travel we arrived at Nakachari and were greeted by two affable Nagas. I asked them to take me to Mr Archer's bungalow, which I assumed would be a mile or so from the railway station.

'Well actually,' they said, 'Mokokchung is forty-seven miles away.'

This was a good deal further than I expected, but I was not unduly perturbed, for I supposed it would not take very long. 'Where,' I said, 'is the car?'

'I am afraid,' replied one of the Nagas, 'a car wouldn't be much use, for there's no road. We shall have to walk. It takes four days.'

So walk we did, a very strenuous expedition in the great heat, but there were good dak bungalows along the way and Bill came down one stage to greet us.

We spent a few days in Mokokchung itself and visited a number of Ao villages in the neighbourhood and then went across to Kohima, where we met the famous Sir Charles Pawsey and were taken by a very charming and efficient Naga official, Mr Kevichusa Angami, to see a number of Naga villages. I had already begun collecting material for a new book on tribal art and I took many photographs of the old village gates, so strikingly carved, most of which have been destroyed by now. I also met Phizo, who was then developing his xenophobic policy which was to bring so much suffering and discredit on his people.

Then Shamrao returned to Patangarh and I went down to meet Bill at Jorhat and we went together into the Konyak country, up to Wakching where Christoph von Fürer-Haimendorf had once spent a year. Bill, of course, was very busy about his official duties, and during our few days' stay in Wakching many of the Konyak and Phom Chiefs from Tuensang came to visit him. We both made useful collections of carvings, hats and other trophies.

On our way up, we arrived completely by chance at a village called Kongan just as it was celebrating the capture of a human ear from a remote village near Burma. The British Government was then doing what it could to check head-hunting and this particular village had accepted a well-meant suggestion to hunt monkeys instead of human beings. Unfortunately, immediately after they had done so, they had a disastrous outbreak of cholera and decided that substitutes just would not do.

The custom at this time was that if you could not get a complete head you could buy part of one, such as an ear, from a more successful village. The people of Kongan had done this and, when we arrived, were celebrating the purchase just as if they had conducted a victorious head-hunting expedition themselves. I have seen many Naga dances since then but nothing ever to compare with this, for this was the real thing, not something 'laid on' for a visiting official. In fact, the people had no idea that we were coming and would certainly not have done

the dance had they heard in time, for Bill in his official capacity had to impose a heavy fine, though with great reluctance. The villagers, however, took it very well and said that after all it was worth it, as they would now get good crops and better babies.

From Mokokchung I went by myself, with my assistant Sundarlal and a completely delightful Naga interpreter, into the Konyak country. Now we saw the last of the old life. The missionaries had not yet penetrated into the villages we visited and everything was going on as it must have done for hundreds of years past. Next to my Cabrai expedition it was one of the most exciting adventures I have ever had.

II

My next visit to Assam was in 1952 when the Governor, Mr Jairamdas Daulatram, invited me. This time Shamrao and I drove all the way from Patangarh by car along roads that were not then as good as they are today. It took us nearly twenty-four hours to cross the Ganges in a country boat. In Shillong I had some long talks with the Governor and called on N. K. (Nari) Rustomji who was then Adviser for Tribal Areas, including the great tract of what was then little-explored territory, the North-East Frontier Agency (NEFA). Today we both remember with amusement that almost the first thing Nari said to me was, 'I am sorry to tell you that NEFA is out.' For I was not yet (though by no fault of mine) officially an Indian citizen, and foreigners were not normally admitted into the area.

Actually my idea was to visit the hills of Manipur, of which I had heard enthusiastic accounts. We drove from Shillong to Dimapur and then, through Kohima, down to Imphal where we found to our dismay that there was only one small dak bungalow, which was so crowded that it looked like a bazaar, and no hotel. We went to see the Deputy Commissioner, a pleasant person called M. N. Phukan who had a guest-house in his garden, allowed us to stay in it, and arranged all 'facilities'. We drove about the beautiful valley and then Shamrao returned

home and I went with Sundarlal on a hundred-mile trip by foot through the Kabui hills.

The Kabuis of eastern Manipur are among the most attractive tribal people in India. Graceful, hospitable and industrious, they combine a delicate sensitivity with an impeccable taste for design and colour. Although they have no wood-carving or painting, their women weave very pretty cloth, and the young men excel in personal adornment, making splendid head-dresses, armlets and necklets of bone and ivory, and unusual decorations for the ears and throat.

When I was staying in a village called Haochang, I noticed a number of little wooden cases stuck in the rafters of the house where I was being entertained. My host took one of them down and, slipping off the cane bands which kept it closed, opened it and revealed, nestling between leaves and scraps of silk-cotton, a lovely ornament made of the brilliant blue feathers of the Long-Tailed Broadbill. In the other cases there were similar ornaments of different shapes and sizes. The following day, the villagers were observing a festival for a child's ear-piercing ceremony and for the dance that followed the boys tied these ornaments to their ears, and covered their heads with horns and feathers. One boy had a glittering pendant made of beetle-backs; the girls, waving their arms in the air, fluttered like butterflies, and the young warriors paraded with their spears. The dance, I was told, had no special meaning: 'it was for beauty and happiness.'

Fortunate are those who, even in this utilitarian modern world, can place beauty and happiness first among their concerns!

The Kabui trip was a wonderful experience, but poor Sundarlal developed acute arthritis in the latter part of the tour and walking was agony for him. When we got back to Imphal I put him in the hospital, where he had to remain for three weeks. Phukan, however, was going on a tour in the Thangkhul country and I accompanied him as far as Ukhrul but afterwards went by myself, as Phukan is the fastest walker I have ever met and I could not keep up with him. Instead I had a young Thangkhul Christian as my guide and interpreter through the wide and open glories of the country round the Sirohi moun-

tains, to the top of which we climbed. He dressed in an American bush-coat and a jockey's cap, but he was good company and an excellent guide. He tended, however, to talk rather a lot about Salvation and sometimes I felt as if I was walking with the ghost of my own lost youth.

III

I returned to Patangarh and made another visit to the Santal country but all through 1953 I found that I was getting a little stale. I felt that I had explored central India rather thoroughly. I had been violently excited and equally frustrated by Assam, and the constant rise in prices and wages was making it very difficult for any private person to carry on research.

Suddenly at the beginning of December, like a call from heaven, as I was sitting in our house at Patangarh, a mysterious telegram arrived from New Delhi signed by somebody called FOREIGN, asking me to come immediately to sit on some Selection Board for NEFA. I knew nothing about the capital and my only knowledge of NEFA was that it was a place I was not allowed to visit. The telegram had been delayed a week on the way, so there was very little time, and there was no letter to explain what it was about. After some agitated consultations with Lila and Shamrao I thought I had better go, and Lila and I went off together to Delhi as soon as we could.

We got a place in Constitution House. Most of the rooms in this attractively inexpensive hostelry have common bath-rooms. You went from your room into the bath-room and bolted the door which led into the room on the other side. This gave you temporary privacy which you surrendered by unbolting the other person's door when you went out. Unfortunately, Lila began by forgetting the unbolting ceremony with the result that our neighbour, a young and rather violent journalist, got extremely annoyed.

A few days later we were invited to breakfast by the Prime Minister and our neighbour saw his chance to take revenge. As breakfast was at 8.30 we naturally got up at 5.0, only to find that the door on our side was firmly locked and all our bangings

and entreaties failed to make the slightest impression. We were both almost frantic, for one does not have breakfast with a Prime Minister every day, and Lila naturally wanted to look her best. Even I wanted a shave. We ran about trying to find some other bath-room but every room was full and it was not until a quarter past seven and after I had humbly apologized, that our young neighbour agreed to open the door and allowed us to get a wash.

But this is by the way. Early in the morning, the day after we arrived, there was a summons from my mysterious friend Foreign, who turned out to be a Joint Secretary in the Ministry of External Affairs, T. N. Kaul.

Tikki Kaul is the kind of person whom you like at first sight, and within five minutes I felt that I had known him all my life. He told me that it had been decided to form a new cadre of officials (which was ultimately called the Indian Frontier Administrative Service), that I should help to select them, and that the Prime Minister had suggested that I should join the NEFA Administration to advise it on tribal problems.

The idea was so new to me that at first I did not know what to say. I felt like someone who, after being refused a sandwich, is suddenly offered a seven-course dinner. It would mean pulling up my roots in Patangarh but, on the other hand, it would open a very wide new field of work both for the welfare of the tribes and in research. I wired to Shamrao to come to Delhi, and Lila, he and I had a long discussion and finally decided that I should accept the NEFA proposal, even though from Shamrao's point of view this was a very serious blow, for it meant that he would be left to carry on alone in Patangarh. But Shamrao has always been a person of singular unselfishness and he felt that this would be a good thing for me to do.

The move to NEFA, though I think something of the kind was a logical development and perhaps inevitable, meant a reversal of many of my original ideals. It meant going from a village that was over a hundred miles in the interior to live in a town, a small town it is true, and one in the heart of a tribal area, but still a town. It meant a regular income with comforts and amenities that I had never known before, and a corresponding loss of my former intimacy with the realities of poverty and

exploitation. It meant a loss of freedom; one could no longer say exactly what one liked; one had to work to a programme: there were rules. It meant a decline in 'eccentricity', for since coming to Shillong my life has been tediously conventional.

All this raised the problem: which was more important, to have elevated ideals operating over a restricted field or to be useful on a wider scale? I have no doubt in my own mind that coming to NEFA greatly increased my usefulness to the tribes: it widened my own horizons; it strengthened my personal influence on many individuals. It decreased my own opportunities for research but made it possible for me to stimulate and direct research by other people. The restraints and discipline were doubtless very good for me. On the whole, I think it was the right thing.

IV

In Delhi, therefore, I took my seat on the Selection Board to help choose the foundation members of what was to be the IFAS. In the last eight years I have sat on a good many Selection Boards and they are much more interesting and amusing than they sound, though I frankly doubt the possibility of making a decision affecting a man's entire life in an interview of fifteen minutes. Indeed, an official from England, who had a good deal to do with such Boards there, told me that they had worked it out statistically that thirty per cent of their selections were unsuccessful.

On one Board a candidate came in looking exactly like a gorilla, with a great prognathous jaw and hands hanging down to the floor on either side of his chair. We asked him his record and he claimed to be a champion boxer and weight-lifter. When I asked him if he had any academic qualifications, he replied that he did not think these would be needed on the frontier.

One of the important things in selecting candidates for the frontier is to discover their attitude to the tribes, and the examiners would sometimes ask whether the applicant would be willing to marry a tribal girl.

'Certainly,' replied one of them, 'provided a suitable candidate presents herself.'

I was so keen on getting to NEFA and starting to tour during the winter months that I asked Tikki Kaul to let me leave the Selection Board early and I went back as quickly as possible to Patangarh and packed up. I had a feeling, a right feeling as it turned out, that this was going to mean drastic separation from the people I had known for so many years, and of whom I had grown so fond, and it was a real wrench to break away from Patangarh. But it had to be done and I went down to Calcutta where Victor Sassoon joined me, for he had offered to come and help us settle in Shillong, the beautiful but now overcrowded town in the Khasi Hills of Assam where the NEFA Administration has its headquarters. We flew up to Gauhati on 31 December 1953 and got to the Pinewood Hotel in Shillong just in time for the New Year Eve dinner. The next day I went to see the Governor and Rustomji, who was still Adviser, and began my new life. I was at first called Anthropological Consultant but after a year this was changed to Adviser for Tribal Affairs, which was more appropriate. I was not a regular Government servant, but was paid an honorarium and was at first on a three-year contract: this was renewed for another three, and then for another five, years. The post carries no pension but, though I may have to leave NEFA one day, I cannot imagine myself ever actually retiring.

Nari Rustomji is a unique character, one of the friendliest and kindest people you could meet in a lifetime, a man of great imagination and sympathy, with brains and an infectious vitality. On that first day he took me for a walk for several miles, most of it uphill, which meant that I was so breathless that I could not say a word, which was, I think, exactly what he wanted, for it gave him a chance to brief me, without interruption, at considerable length. Nari has a profound and essentially practical affection for the tribal people. He has an extraordinary flair for them as persons and his great love for and knowledge of music has helped to endear him to these music-loving folk. I do not think anybody has done more for Naga individuals or felt more deeply for them. His mother, 'Mummy Rustomji', who kept house for him for many years,

is a warm, generous person. Very recently, just in time to get her into this book, Nari married the bewitching Avi Dalal.

A person who played a very large part in my life during my first few years in NEFA was the Governor, Mr Jairamdas Daulatram. We did not always agree, but our discussions added a spice to life and we were always held together by our common absorption in tribal problems. The Governor was specially interested in tribal religion and never tired of asking questions about the people's attitude to the Supreme Being.

One day, for example, a Tagin Chief from the wild north of Subansiri was brought over to Shillong. He was a ferocious-looking person, bristling with weapons, with a very long pipe sticking out of his mouth. The Governor asked me, with an interpreter, to come and hear what he had to say. The Tagin marched into Raj Bhavan and to my admiration (for I myself always put out my cigar when I met the Governor) kept his pipe firmly in place. We all sat down and Mr Daulatram began his questions. After about half an hour's interrogation the Tagin showed signs of restiveness; the clouds of noxious smoke from the pipe grew blacker and his hand began to move, to our great alarm, towards his long razor-sharp sword. When at last the Governor reached the critical point and asked for his views on the nature of the Supreme Being, the Tagin replied, 'I don't know anything about that; what I want is a drop of beer.'

The Governor always used green ink. He rarely went to bed before two in the morning and studied every report and tour diary, even of the most junior officers, in minute detail, making notes on every possible point. He had the idea of writing a large book about NEFA which he might well have done, for his knowledge and love were unsurpassed. Perhaps he still will write it: I hope so.

V

I was at first completely lost in Shillong. Apart from discussions with the Governor, of which there were a good many, and listening to Nari, there was not much to occupy me: nobody quite knew what to do with me. There was virtually no

literature to study but I was given copies of old tour diaries. My very first 'case' concerned the library in the great Buddhist monastery at Tawang, which I suggested should be catalogued ; three years later it was.

Nobody seemed anxious to become my stenographer ; I could not even get a chaprasi. Had Victor not been with me, I doubt if I would ever have got anything. The two fundamental problems were a house and a car. We went house-hunting everywhere, for a long time without success, but finally discovered a large building on the outskirts of the town in a part called Nongthymmai. It was on a little hill and agreeably isolated among the pines. There was a cemetery opposite, which kept it quiet, and the approach-road was difficult, but this rather suited me. Here I could feel back in the forest.

After a lot of hesitation and strong prompting by Victor, who pointed out that there was room in this remarkable house for my museum collections and library as well as an office, I decided to rent it and Victor went down to Calcutta to fix up everything with the landlord, a distinguished barrister, A. C. Ganguly. For years we have had the happiest relations with him and his family, and his recent death was a real blow to us.

Victor also got us a car, a very old Rover. It once actually did the journey to Gauhati, when I went to fetch Lila and the children who joined me in Shillong when things were in some sort of order.

So, by the end of January, I had a family, a house, a car and even a telephone, a thing I had never had all my life before. Our phone-number was a little unfortunate, for it was 420 which in the Indian Penal Code is the section which deals with Cheating. On the other hand, most people in Shillong, where the telephone exchange has not yet reached four figures, have numbers with some relation to the IPC and we consoled ourselves with the reflection that at least we were not 302 (Murder) or 397 (Adultery). And, as a devout Baptist said, we were lucky that our car number was not 666.

About this time I became an Indian citizen which I had been trying to be for a long time past and which I had been *de facto* from my early days in Sabarmati. The order was issued by the Assam Government and friends have sometimes raised the

question whether this made me an Assamese. Actually, of course, when one becomes an Indian citizen one becomes a citizen of India as a whole. One day I hope it will be possible to become a citizen of the world. Yet this has given me a special affinity with Assam and I have a great liking for the gentle, artistic Assamese people. Constitutionally NEFA is part of Assam and from my earliest days in Shillong I felt how important it was that these two areas should be in amity with each other and know each other well. The old days of tribal raids on the inoffensive plains and of military retaliation are happily long over, for NEFA at least, and the fortunes of the frontier hills are obviously bound up with those of their immediate neighbour Assam.

VI

By the end of January I had collected my staff and started the office. We had even got a cook, whom Victor named 'the gourmet's dream'. My Khasi steno, who was a good scrounger, got me a comfortable chair and an office clock. For the first time in my life I began dealing with files. When I was in the Department of Anthropology I was engaged entirely in research work and I do not think that a file ever came my way. It was not easy to adjust myself to the atmosphere of an office, to deal with audit objections or even the mechanical business of endorsing documents.

NEFA was fascinating for someone like myself who had lived a sheltered life in the forest for so long. There were contacts with the Army, Air Force, the whole official world, and the Assam Rifles, that very special force which polices the frontiers of north-eastern India.

In the middle of January a new Adviser, K. L. Mehta, arrived. For a long time I called him Ken, vaguely supposing that the 'K' in his initials stood for Kenneth. Later he told me that I must write Kan, short for Kanhaiya Lal, and I remarked that a single letter could change a name from one hemisphere to the other. Rustomji was transferred to Sikkim where he spent five very successful years as Diwan, returning

to Shillong in 1959 for a second term as Adviser, and going on in the middle of 1963 to Bhutan.

Kan Mehta will be remembered as one of the great administrators of the tribal areas, and the idea of the 'single line administration', which was developed during his time, has excited the admiration of all visitors to NEFA. He had no previous experience of the tribal people but his quick and lively mind soon grasped their problems, and his intellectual generosity was such that he did not automatically oppose a policy simply because it was commended by someone else. This meant that we were able to work together harmoniously and *A Philosophy for NEFA*, which I worked out, owes a great deal to him. Kan's wife, Gisela, is a lovely person. In the five-and-a-half years that she was in Shillong I never once heard her say a nasty thing about anyone, and she was ideally fitted to hold together the various elements in the administration.

Another very fine man, with whom I have been closely connected for many years, is Pran Luthra who succeeded Rustomji as Adviser in July 1963. An exceptionally good field officer, he later came to Shillong as Development Commissioner and, after a time in Delhi, played an important part in the solution of the Naga problem as the first Commissioner of the newly-established Naga Hills-Tuensang Area. Highly competent, driving everybody hard, but always very good to his subordinates, he at times reminds me of Sydney Smith's description of someone as a 'steam-engine in trousers', which is, of course, just what we want, for he gets things done. At the same time he is human and witty and once, travelling from Gauhati to Shillong, he kept the whole carload of people in constant chuckles with descriptions of his various experiences. But the strongest link I have had with him is on a deeper level. Some years ago he was appointed to escort the Dalai and Panchen Lamas round the Buddhist holy places in India. This, I suspect, had a profound effect on him and as I too had come under Buddhist influence about the same time, our minds began to move in the same direction. Whenever I have been ill or depressed he has always been a great comfort and support. His wife, Indira, is equally charming and her knowledge and good

taste inspired her to a splendid bit of work in reviving the cottage industries of Kohima. She arranged a first-rate exhibition in Delhi, which I had the honour of opening. An extra pleasure was to find my admired friend Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya in the chair.

Yet another friend and counsellor for five years was Brigadier D. M. Sen. Formerly Judge-Advocate in the Army he has, throughout the time I have known him, guided the legal policy of the Administration in NEFA, and later in Nagaland, with great wisdom. What we call our Kebang policy (by which nearly all disputes and even criminal matters are entrusted to the traditional tribal councils in NEFA) owes everything to him and its success can be judged by the fact that at the time of writing there are only half a dozen NEFA tribesmen in jail. Gentle and affectionate, Sen has brought a tolerant and sympathetic philosophy into our dealings with the tribal people.

I cannot possibly do justice to my friends and colleagues in Assam and NEFA. There are so many, so many to whom I owe much or to whom I have owed much—at a crisis, on an expedition, in conference. But I cannot omit Major-General Ajit Guraya, head of the Assam Rifles, his wife Prem—and specially young Vijay, Nakul's special friend. And just one more: dear Diying Eting, Member of Parliament for NEFA and now a Parliamentary Secretary, who symbolizes the way the tribal people are coming forward to help in shaping their own destiny.

After an initial period of not having very much to do, once we had moved into the new house I found myself extremely busy. A training course was started for the newly recruited Political Officers and for two or three weeks we met daily in Raj Bhavan to hear lectures and hold discussions. I had to give four lectures on 'the tribal approach' which went over quite well. I noticed with gratification that at least one of the officers was taking me seriously, being assiduous in taking notes. I mentioned this to him at the end of the lectures and he said, 'Well, as a matter of fact, what I was really doing was composing dubious limericks.'

Then we also had the Hills and Plains Festival which for some reason was never repeated. For somebody new to Assam

this was very exciting, for the tribal people from most of the Hill Districts attended it and parties from all over NEFA came down to dance and enjoy themselves. The Governor, Jairamdas Daulatram, gave a big lunch party on the lawns of Raj Bhavan and I was greatly struck by the way all the visitors mixed up together and the Governor himself sat on the ground between two of the NEFA tribal ladies. There was nothing of the atmosphere which I have met elsewhere, when at a party the officials are given chairs while the tribal people sit on the ground or where different kinds of food or cigarettes are given to the two classes of visitors.

At the end of January Kan and I snatched two days away from Shillong to make a first very hurried tour of NEFA. We left Shillong at four in the morning of a Sunday and got back late at night on the Monday, flying round to a number of places. This journey by air impressed on me the grandeur of the frontier mountains and the magnitude of our task.

Before we left on this trip Nari pulled my leg unmercifully. He pointed out the extreme danger of flying in NEFA at all and particularly of flying to the places we proposed to visit. The landing-ground at one place, he said, sloped downwards to the river and, whenever a plane landed, Assam Rifles jawans had to stand on both sides of the air strip and catch hold of its wings in order to bring it to a halt before it plunged into the river. Elsewhere aircraft crashed into the sides of mountains and bumped against football-posts on the ground. In any case, there were no doors on these very old Dakotas, for they were removed to facilitate air-dropping, and one never knew what sort of fellow-passengers one would have. In actual fact, I have travelled with cows, goats, sheep and, on this particular tour, with a large pig.

Flying in NEFA is always exciting, for if anything were to go wrong there would be little chance among the mountains. One of the most memorable flights I have ever made was in a light Auster, which has a seat for just one passenger, down from the hills. It was a rough day and we had to go very high. In this little aircraft you sit inside a sort of plastic bubble and you really feel that you are flying. That day the views were superb, for there were dark clouds everywhere with occasional bursts

of sunshine lighting the savage hills that seemed to be clawing up at us.

For a long time I disliked flying, though I have done so much in the last few years, including a good deal among the mountains of NEFA and landing in the most unsuitable places, that I am getting used to it. My first trip in a Viscount, curiously enough, was one of the most alarming. Of all the things I dislike is the pilot's habit of switching on an orange-lighted notice to tell you to fasten your seat-belt in mid-air; this means that you are in for turbulence or worse.

I was sitting about half-way up the aircraft, reading a little book of meditations on sudden death. That meant that I had my reading-glasses on and could not decipher anything at a distance. After we had been in the air for about an hour, I noticed that the orange light was on, and hastily with trembling fingers fastened my seat-belt, and lay back with eyes shut waiting for the end. Presently, taking a peep at the panel I saw the light was off. Splendid fellow, our pilot, I thought. 'He's gone over or round it' and I undid myself. But ten minutes later, on went the light again. Once more I fastened my belt with unsteady hands and lay back concentrating on tender images of my wife and little ones. A few minutes later the light went off again. We are safe after all. By now I had given up reading and put on my other glasses. When a few minutes later the light went on yet again, I was able to see the notice. It read ENGAGED.

VII

From this time onward I divided my time between touring, research and evolution of policy. I discovered a completely new form of literary activity—noting on files—which is interesting, but has the drawback for a professional writer (when, as so often in NEFA, the noting has to be Secret or Top Secret) of confining one's readers to one or two people. In fact, I achieved the Miltonic ideal—'Fit audience find though few', though sometimes I have wondered whether there was any audience at all.

The most important and the most enjoyable part of my work during these years has been the touring, to which I devote a separate chapter. Until very recently I was in the mountains for six or seven months every year.

The character of my research work changed, as it was bound to do. Formerly I had a great deal of time, freedom from pre-occupations and I was able to settle down for long periods among the people. In NEFA I had to survey a vast tract of mountainous territory, some thirty-three thousand square miles in extent, and help to look after thirty or forty tribal groups. What I did, therefore, was to go out on tour for periods varying from three to six or seven weeks far into the interior, collect what sociological facts were possible, write reports on the general condition of the tribes and make suggestions to the Administration. I have continued my interest in folklore and art but my main concern has been in what is called applied anthropology.

The first book I wrote was at the instance of the Governor, Mr Daulatram, who wanted a small book on Gandhi which would appeal to the tribal people. Most of the books about him stress aspects of his life and teaching which are not only unfamiliar but tend to put off or puzzle the tribal reader. For example, Gandhi took a vow not to drink cow's milk. The tribesman could not understand how, in view of this, we were doing all we could to persuade him to break his taboo on milk and give it to his children. Gandhi regarded alcohol and tobacco as bad, an estimate with which the people emphatically disagree. So I wrote a little book emphasizing those aspects of Gandhi's life which I thought would appeal to the tribes. It has now been translated into Hindi, Adi, Ao Naga, Monpa, Apa Tani, Daffa and other languages.

For several years I collected folktales on my tours, many of them strikingly original and nearly all quite unlike those in my other collections. When I had enough, I published a book, *Myths of the North-East Frontier of India*, which contains about four hundred of these stories.

I had also gradually been making extracts from the old literature about NEFA, of which there is a great deal more than is generally supposed, though most of it is buried in rare books

which are very hard to come by. In my *India's North-East Frontier in the 19th Century*, therefore, which was published by the Oxford University Press, I made a book of about five hundred pages containing a large number of extracts from the old explorers, missionaries and administrators who wrote between 1800 and 1900. Many of these extracts are of the greatest interest and some are amusing. The book had an unexpected success and has now been reprinted.

Since then I have done a similar anthology. *The Nagas in the 19th Century* which will be published before long.

I had for some years been thinking of writing a sequel to my *Tribal Art of Middle India* and had collected a fairly large number of pictures, which I still have. In NEFA, however, I found a storehouse of treasures, far beyond anything I had made elsewhere, and from my very first visit to Tuensang, where I collected many authentic head-hunting relics, I managed to add to my collection during every tour I made. I also took a large number of photographs, some of which came out fairly well, and finally had sufficient to make into a book which I called *The Art of the North-East Frontier of India*. The Administration agreed that we should publish it ourselves and I found this great fun. It was printed by the Saraswat Press, Calcutta, which is managed by some very competent people who are most pleasant to deal with. We had an excellent artist, R. Bagchi, and the preparation of the lay-outs and so on was an absorbing task. Finance was very good to me, for my friend Nirmal Sen Gupta, himself an artist (he did a charming sketch of Wasant), was then in charge of Finance and we were able to bring out an impressively printed book which, in spite of being rather expensive, has had a very fair circulation.

The most widely-read of my books, however, was *A Philology for NEFA*, now in a third revised edition. Later I wrote a rather short book, about a hundred pages, on Nagaland, of which I was again both author and publisher. This was not a sociological study but dealt with the history and politics of this interesting part of the world. As a publication, it won a President's Award.

I was asked to give general direction to the work of a small Research Department. This had different sections—one for

cultural, one for philological and a third for historical research. The department has since produced a number of books in all its different subjects. One of the things that distinguishes it and has greatly contributed to its output has been the fact that we have posted Research Officers in the interior so that they have to live among their people, relax in their company and spend virtually their whole time studying them. Outstanding among our officers is B. Das Shastri, a philologist, a brilliant scholar and a man of wide and unusual interests whose friendship has come to mean a great deal to me.

As time went by the scope of my work enlarged. I had a lot to do with the establishment of a Tribal Research Institute for Assam State. I was appointed Hon. Adviser for Tribal Affairs for both Manipur and Tripura, to which I pay occasional visits though not as many as I would like. I have never been appointed to any official post in the Naga area but, in practice, I have paid a number of visits to it both before and after the foundation of Nagaland.

This naturally widened my circle of friends. In Imphal there were J. M. Raina and his brilliant wife Vimala. In Shillong I found many friends—Mr and Mrs Duncan, wise leaders of the Khasi people; other tribal leaders like Mrs Khongmen, Stanley Nichols-Roy and L. K. Doley; Ahmed Kidwai, R. B. Vaghaiwalla and P. H. Trivedi, men of wide reading and ready wit; R. T. Rymbai, with whom I worked for the Assam Research Institute; S. Barkataki, whose knowledge of the tribal areas is profound and whose caustic pen is always stimulating; and many others.

VIII

Then in 1959, the Home Minister, Pandit G. B. Pant, asked me to be chairman of a committee to study the progress of development in selected tribal areas throughout the country. Under the Second Five-Year Plan the normal Community Development Blocks had been supplemented by a scheme, sponsored and paid for by the Home Ministry, for what were then known as Special Multipurpose Tribal Blocks, the main point of which was that each Block was given twenty-seven

lakhs of rupees instead of twelve. This came in for a good deal of criticism, for it was said that the money was not spent properly and sometimes not at all, and my committee was set up to investigate and report on what was really happening.

My colleagues were all men of wide experience in the tribal areas, and one of the very best of the younger men working in this field, O. K. Moorthy, who had for many years been concerned with tribal affairs in the Home Ministry, was Secretary.

We took about a year to complete our report and its preparation gave me opportunity to revisit some of my old haunts and discover others. For the first time I was able to go to the tribal districts of Andhra Pradesh, Chanda and Mokada-Talasari in Bombay, the Autonomous Hill Districts of Assam, and later to Rajasthan.

When we had finished our inquiries I felt the only possible way of getting a report written was to do it in Delhi, and the Home Ministry accommodated me in a pleasant room in the main Secretariat where I spent a couple of months. As this was holiday time for the children I took them and Lila with me and we all stayed with the Rathces, which must have been a tremendous burden on them but was very delightful for us.

Khemlal Rathce was Financial Adviser to the NEFA administration and when he left there were extraordinary demonstrations of regret. Himself a Jat, he had an instinctive feeling for the tribes and made it his business to understand them thoroughly. In honesty akin to men like Jamnalal Bajaj, universal in kindness, accessible to everyone, deeply religious in the right way, an excellent administrator, he has played a unique part in my life. His family and mine came very close together and his wonderful wife is a great friend of Lila's.

One day while I was working in Delhi, I wanted to make a quotation from *King Lear* to emphasize a point in my report and I sent my assistant over to the Secretariat Library to get a copy of Shakespeare, as none of my friends had one. When he asked for it, the Librarian said sharply, 'What is the Home Ministry doing reading Shakespeare in office hours? I certainly won't issue a copy.' My assistant replied, 'But this is for Dr Elwin.' 'Oh, Dr Elwin? I know he does read that sort of thing. All right, he'd better have it.'

There was also the problem of how to put things.

The Community Development people are devoted and intelligent. The only trouble is that I often just cannot understand what they are talking about. And, what is even more disconcerting, they cannot understand me.

For example, where I would say, 'How do you do it?' they say 'What is your methodological approach?'

In one note I remarked that 'when tribal girls go to the towns, they sometimes become tarts'. This caused a lot of trouble. I was hauled over the coals at a very high level for using the word 'tart' in an official document. The sentence was then revised for my instruction to show me how one ought to write. 'When females belonging to the Scheduled Tribes become acculturated to the socio-economic conditions of urban society, they become psychologically maladjusted and adopt anti-social practices.' That is what is necessary: that is what people understand.

However at last, after toning down my English suitably, all the members agreed to sign the report which ran to about 550 pages, most of them written, or at least rewritten, by me, and I presented it to the Home Minister, Pandit G. B. Pant, at the end of March 1960.

Our report dealt with all the varied aspects of development. We had chapters on staffing problems and training; on land, forests and agriculture with special attention to the vexed question of shifting cultivation; on animal husbandry, communications, health services, education, women's programmes, arts and crafts, housing, cooperation and research. We also supplied detailed and specific accounts of twenty of the Special Blocks in different parts of India.

I myself felt that the most important part of our report was an introductory chapter called 'The Fundamentals of an Approach to the Tribes' for, as I have said on many occasions, it is not so much what you do, still less the amount of money you spend, as the way you will do it that makes the real difference to the tribal people. One of the criticisms of these Special Development schemes had been that they lacked any 'tribal touch', for stereotyped plans had generally been taken over as they stood for the tribal areas and there was no serious

attempt to adapt the budget to tribal needs or the policy to tribal life. The idea of a 'tribal touch' caused a certain amount of ridicule, for unsympathetic officials interpreted it as meaning that we wanted the people to put feathers in their hair and go about with nothing on. This was not, of course, the idea at all and we explained what it really meant.

A 'tribal touch' or 'tribal bias' means that we must look, if we can, at things through tribal eyes and from the tribal point of view. We must find out what means most to them. We must see that they do in fact get a square deal: we must save them from the exploiters who still invade their villages, and ensure that in the future they will be in a position to administer and develop their own areas.

A tribal bias means that we recognize and honour their way of doing things, not because it is old or picturesque but because it is theirs, and they have as much right to their own culture and religion as anyone else in India. It means that we must talk their language, and not only the language that is expressed in words but the deeper language of the heart. It means that we will not make the tribes ashamed of their past or force a sudden break with it, but that we will help them to build upon it and grow by a natural process of evolution. It does not mean a policy of mere preservation; it implies a constant development and change, a change that in time will bring unbelievable enrichment, as there is ever closer integration in the main stream of Indian life and culture.

We concluded by suggesting a great expansion of properly-adapted development schemes during the Third Five-Year Plan, and asked for what we called a 'trivial' thirty crores of rupees for new Tribal Blocks. This, we pointed out, when spread over difficult and widespread areas, was actually a very modest sum. We went on to say:

The fear has been expressed that this will involve too rapid a progress, too complicated a programme, the employment of inferior men. This need not be so. We agree that we should 'hasten slowly', advance with caution, give the tribes a breathing-space to adapt themselves to the new world. Whatever we do, that world will come upon them and they must be ready for it. Hunger, disease, exploitation, ignorance, isolation

are evils whose cure cannot be delayed; they must be treated rapidly and efficiently.

Each man is his brother's keeper and we must all atone for our long neglect and our wrong attitude. Mankind is one and the tribes are a very precious part of mankind.

The report was well received and discussed at a number of conferences and meetings. The Government of India did not accept some of the administrative proposals but did, by and large, accept practically everything else. I think that our fundamental ideas of tribal development have now won very general acceptance.

IX

The work on this committee took me away from NEFA a good deal and I was looking forward to returning to my main job when it ended, but in April 1960 a Scheduled Areas and Scheduled Tribes Commission, as provided in the Constitution of India, was appointed. Mr U. N. Dhebar was the Chairman and I was one of the members. There were nine others, most of them Members of Parliament, and the terms of reference were very wide indeed, much wider, of course, than those of my own committee.

Dhebar had been Congress President and a Chief Minister; he is a persuasive and attractive man, with a boundless capacity for work and a passionate belief in social and economic justice. I got on well with him and we agreed on most of the major policy matters that came before us. Dhebar kept the Commission down to earth and was essentially interested in obtaining justice for the tribal people who had been so long neglected and so grossly exploited. The Commission's report has made its chief contribution by its insistence on a fair deal for the tribal people politically, economically and in the field of administration. We discovered that the Fifth Schedule of the Constitution, which set up special areas all over tribal India in which the Governors were expected to take a special interest, had been an almost complete failure. Land was still being alienated on a staggering scale. Millions of tribesmen were in the clutches of the

moneylenders. The great industrial projects have led to the dispossession of vast tracts of tribal land and, although proper compensation was provided, this had often not been paid. On the question of development the Commission had nothing very new to say and in a sense it was a duplication of the work of our earlier committee and other committees.

Unfortunately just when I should have been in Delhi to assist in the writing out of this report I was taken ill and from June 1961 onwards I was not allowed to travel. Dhebar himself was good enough to come over twice all the way from Delhi to see me and to discuss a large number of points that arose from the evidence we had collected, and he made an arrangement that the rest of the Commission would sit in Delhi and prepare drafts of the different chapters, which they would then send down to me by air-freight. My own staff was strengthened by two additional stenographers and another typist and for about two months, during part of which I was in bed and during all of which I was supposed to be having complete rest, we lived in a state of constant excitement. The parcels would arrive, I would get to work on them immediately, revising, amending the English and so on, dictating additional or alternative passages, and then everybody would get to work retyping and we would dispatch again, always within forty-eight hours, by the Chief Minister's special bag that went direct to Delhi. In this way I worked right through the entire report. Unhappily when the day came for the ceremony of signing it, I was still unable to travel but someone flew down from Delhi with thirteen large printed volumes and I signed them in my room in Shillong.

X

During this year I was invited to give the Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel Memorial Lectures. This is an annual event in Delhi, arranged by All India Radio. Previous lecturers were Mr C. Rajagopalachari, Dr J. B. S. Haldane, Dr M. S. Krishnan and Dr Zakir Hussain. I was very pleased about this for two reasons. I took as my subject 'The Philosophy of Love' and this meant that I had to re-read a great deal, which I was able to do for

at the time I was confined to the house under doctor's orders. This did me a lot of good. It forced me to study again Gandhi's ideas on Ahimsa in all their beauty and profundity; it fired me afresh with my old enthusiasm for Plato and Augustine, though it confirmed me in my original impression that Aristotle was a dull dog. I felt much more charitable towards C. S. Lewis after reading his *Allegory of Love* for (I am ashamed to say) the first time. I discovered Father M. C. D'Arcy and some of the writings of Bengal Vaishnavism.

The other reason was that I have always had a very affectionate memory of Sardar Patel and he had a considerable influence on my life, since it was he who had originally insisted that I should go to tribal India.

Normally I dislike lecturing: I feel nervous beforehand and disgusted with myself afterwards. I never write out anything, for it is only when you speak off the cuff that you can get *en rapport* with your audience. So I was rather apprehensive about these lectures, which I had had to write, for I should have to read them out (each an hour long) to an audience and be recorded at the same time.

But in fact it worked out very well. After twenty minutes or so I felt quite at home and I found that having to speak into a microphone was rather consoling. I had, of course, to use my reading-glasses and this meant that the audience was reduced to an unfocused blur and I lost interest in how they responded, even though the AIR auditorium was crowded with people, many of whom I think expected me to talk on those aspects of love about which I had been so explicit in some of my books. Two truck-loads of lady sociologists, I was told, came for the first lecture but were somewhat disappointed at the elevated character of my remarks, and did not come again. I did, of course, touch on sex but since the lectures were recorded and broadcast in chunks of half an hour a time on six successive Wednesdays, I obviously could not say very much. Even so one of the Delhi papers came out with headlines: *ELWIN SAYS CARNAL LOVE IS GOOD*, and so it is, though I did not put it quite so baldly.

I enjoyed this visit to Delhi, for these lectures brought me in touch with a good many new people and particularly with

the very fine group at Akashvani Bhavan, the AIR headquarters. Long ago I had known the first Controller of Broadcasting in India, Lionel Fielden, fairly well. I stayed with him in Delhi and he invited me to represent India (for two-and-a-half minutes) at the last of King George V's Christmas Eve broadcasts—recently the BBC asked me to do a short piece on a similar occasion when the chief speaker was Queen Elizabeth.

Now I came to know B. P. Bhatt, Director-General, a delightful person with a sensitive knowledge of English poetry; Gopal Das, the Station Director at Gauhati; a younger man, J. D. Bhavaja, who has a wide knowledge of tribal music; and several others. They all gave me a very pleasant time. I was particularly glad to renew my friendship with P. C. (Tiny) Chatterji, whom I had known since my first visit to Assam. Learned as he is in the philosophy of aesthetics, he keeps a light touch on everything, and shares my interest in cigars.

XI

I do not go to Delhi very often, but I generally enjoy myself there: to a provincial like me a visit to the capital is an adventure: one can do a little lion-hunting; interesting things happen. I am not specially excited by important people, but I do like meeting unusual or significant people who have something to say. Let me now describe a few such encounters.

When I go to Delhi the Prime Minister sometimes calls me and I have had many talks with him. On one occasion I had nothing very much to say and did not want to bother him. So I was carefully keeping out of the way. But one morning as I was going to see someone in the External Affairs Ministry I was suddenly taken short and slipped into one of the VIP lavatories along the corridor. When I came out I ran slap into the Prime Minister himself. He said, 'Hallo, what are you doing here?' I didn't quite like to tell him, but he went on to say, 'Come and see me tomorrow.'

I had just published *India's North-East Frontier in the 19th Century*, and my friends insisted that I should take a copy with me to present to Mr Nehru. I raided the Delhi bookshops and

with some difficulty found and bought a copy and on the following day took it with me and presented it to him. He took it and turned over a few pages, grunted a little, then looked at me and said, 'What do you think of *Lolita*?'

All I actually thought was that, with the competition there is nowadays in the field of literature, it is hardly worth while going on.

When Malcolm MacDonald's book *Borneo People* was published I wrote to him saying how much I liked it (incidentally I gave it an enthusiastic review in the *Statesman*). MacDonald, who was then High Commissioner for the United Kingdom in India, wrote back inviting me to come and see him when I next visited Delhi. Accordingly, at the next opportunity I rang up his office, and he asked me to come round for lunch.

When the time came I took a taxi to the High Commissioner's residence and went in. I had never seen MacDonald and had no idea what he was like. I was greeted by a dignified, indeed distinguished-looking, person whom I grasped by the hand and said how much I had enjoyed his book on Borneo. This was rather coldly received and it turned out that this gentleman was MacDonald's Secretary. However, he took me to the drawing-room where there was a nice Englishwoman drinking gin and I allowed myself to be given the same stimulant. Presently a tall elegantly dressed Englishman, who seemed very much at home, walked into the room. I leapt to my feet, seized him by the hand and said how much I had enjoyed his book on Borneo. He seemed a little taken aback and hastily changed the subject.

Five minutes later, yet another tall, distinguished-looking Englishman came in and I again leapt to my feet, seized him by the hand and said my little piece about how much I had enjoyed his book on Borneo. 'Never been there,' replied this individual and rushed for the gin-bottle.

By this time I had come to the conclusion that I was in the wrong house and that these English people, always so polite, were wondering who the devil I was but did not like to say so. But at last MacDonald himself, short, not distinguished-looking at all, completely charming, bustled in, apologizing for being

late and in five minutes we were examining Iban textiles and comparing notes on head-hunters we had known.

During their visit to India in 1958, I had the honour of meeting the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama in New Delhi, and was invited to Rashtrapati Bhavan to a lunch which was attended by the President, the Prime Minister, the great Lamas and their entourage of about seventy monks and a number of Ministers and high officials. The invitation came rather late and my clothes were not quite in order. The only available socks, for example, were a little seedy and one of them had a huge hole in the heel. My shoes, however, appeared to cover it and suppress the rest adequately and, since I knew that at Rashtrapati Bhavan one either sat at table or stood round a buffet, I thought I was safe enough.

We arrived—Khemlal Rathee was with me—and wandered through the splendid rooms sipping our aperitifs of tomato juice.

I met one or two nice people and all was going splendidly until we were asked to go into the great dining-hall for lunch. And then to my horror I saw that, for the first time in history, it was to be a sit-on-the-floor lunch in traditional Indian style. It was superbly arranged; long rows of little seats or *asanas*, with piles of flowers everywhere. How pretty it was, how altogether suitable! But naturally, for an Indian-style meal everybody has to remove his shoes. I got as near the door as I could and then furtively removed my shoes and shuffled in, keeping the toes of one foot covering, as far as possible, the revealing hole in the other.

Happily, the excellence of the food diverted everyone's attention and I think I got out unobserved.

XII

When India became a Republic she abolished all civilian titles, to the agonized regret of those who had them and the disappointment of those who hoped to get them one day. But it was soon found that some sort of honours were necessary even in the public life of a democracy and accordingly four Orders, as they would be called in England, were established—the

Bharat Ratna, Padma Vibhushan, Padma Bhushan and Padma Shri. These are awarded by the President to scientists, doctors, philosophers, musicians, men of letters, leading athletes, artists, social workers and a carefully restricted number of officials and administrators.

On 26 January 1961—Republic Day—I was in Along with the Tribal Commission. Someone had a transistor radio and I was listening to the news when I heard to my great pleasure that I had been awarded the Padma Bhushan.

Three months later, on 27 April, the investiture was held in New Delhi, and I arrived looking reasonably smart in white khadi trousers and short black buttoned-up coat.

For the ceremony recipients were arranged in two rows: I was just behind the late Dr B. C. Roy (who got the Bharat Ratna) and beside me was a veteran and distinguished Congressman. He was dressed in a slightly off-colour shirt and dhoti and his first remark to me was: 'What are you dressed up like that for?'

I murmured something, and he said, 'I dressed like this while I was earning this Padma Bhushan and I'll dress like this while I receive it. Let them turn me out if they don't like it.'

Presently, he asked, 'You are an Englishman?'

'I used to be,' I said.

'Then you will know. This Padma Bhushan would make me a Lord in England?'

'Not quite, I'm afraid.'

'But at least I would be a Sir and my wife a Lady.'

'Something like that.'

'But this is India, so it wouldn't be.'

'It won't be.'

On our chairs were the cases in which the decorations were to be put after we received them. The Bharat Ratna was naturally much bigger, better polished, in every way better than ours. My companion noticed this.

'Why has Dr Roy got a bigger one than me?' he demanded.

I told him why.

'Ah,' he said, seeking refuge in traditional Indian philosophy, 'what does it matter? After all'—raising his voice and directing a cautionary look at the broad back of Dr Roy—'what will

these honours matter in a few years' time? And in any case, most of us'—another look at Dr Roy—'deserve them no more than millions of others. Full many a gem'—he went on, now really getting into his stride—'of purest ray serene wastes its sweetness on the desert air. We are just lucky: we have caught someone's attention.'

And then, more seriously, and I thought rather charmingly: 'I have never sought for or expected honours: my only ambition, as I pray to the Lord, is, Do what thou wilt with me, so long as I may be somewhere near thy feet.'

After this I had so many congratulations from all over the place that I am afraid I rather got into the habit of expecting them. One day when I went to the cinema, the ticket-vendor, who was rather a friend of mine, held out his hand after I had bought my ticket and I grasped it firmly and said, 'Thank you so very much.' It turned out, however, that all he wanted was another twelve naye paise on the entrance-fee.

One day shortly afterwards, I read an amusing leader on the new Companions of Literature in the *Times Literary Supplement*, which quoted Erik Satie as saying that 'To have turned down the Légion d'Honneur is not enough. One should never have deserved it.' Housman refused the C.H. because Galsworthy had been awarded it. I had no such temptation. I actually have never thought I deserved the Padma Bhushan—I had never expected it or anything other than entirely academic awards: I just didn't think in those terms—but I was certainly very pleased, for I felt it was really in recognition of our NEFA policy for the tribes.

XIII

This policy faced its severest test when in October 1962 a long-gathering storm broke over the NEFA hills. The Chinese swept over the frontier in great strength, overwhelming the defence forces in parts of Kameng, Siang and Lohit. First to fall was Tawang, the place of pilgrimage which Lila and I had visited six years previously. Then after a deceptive lull the invaders bypassed the Se La, occupied Bomdi La and came south towards

Tezpur. In Lohit, Wallong fell after heavy fighting and the Chinese threatened the valley below it. At about the same time they thrust their way into northern Siang, invaded the lovely Mechuka valley and occupied some of the little villages where I had once made my camps. The fact that I knew most of the places, except those in the far north of Subansiri, so well made this very real to me. My blood pressure went up twenty-five points after the fall of Tawang, came down during the lull and then went up again thirty points after the collapse of Bomdi La. This was not due to fear or anxiety, for I always had complete confidence about the final outcome of the struggle, but to real sorrow. I felt as if parts of me were being torn away: those days of crisis will never be forgotten by any of us who were closely associated with NEFA.

In Shillong there was some alarm and a number of people sent their families away. Friends put a good deal of pressure on Lila to go away too with the children, but I took the line that we all belonged to the tribal people and to Assam and since it was obviously impossible for the whole population to be evacuated we should remain where we were. Events proved me right, for the cease-fire came and the Chinese withdrew.

Then came the task of re-establishing administration in the areas that had been invaded and of restoring confidence in the people. Happily there were a number of brilliant Frontier Service men available for this exacting duty. Pran Luthra, Bob Khating, U. Chakma, Krishna Johorey, Bernard Dougal and others did a wonderful job, in which they were assisted in every way by the tribal leaders. In a remarkably short time the frontier, so grievously disturbed, had settled down to its normal life again.

9

Travels in the NEFA Highlands

*His country lies beyond and beyond, forest and river,
forest, swamp and river, the mountains of Arakkaboa—
leagues and leagues . . .*

—Walter de la Mare

I

ALTHOUGH nothing has ever compared for sheer academic excitement with my investigations into the Muria dormitory in Bastar and the religion of the Saoras, touring in NEFA has been something completely different to anything I had ever experienced before. Except in the Kuttia Kond and Abujhmar Hills the physical exertion demanded was comparatively easy elsewhere in India. Now in NEFA I had to face vast distances which had always to be done on foot, mountains of a height which I had hardly even seen before and, at least in the early days, tracks were very bad. Although, specially in Orissa, I often visited villages which were practically unexplored, untouched even by minor officials, now in NEFA I aimed always at the most isolated and difficult areas and I had, on a number of occasions, the thrill of being almost an explorer. As a local paper, discussing the possibilities of research, once pointed out: 'NEFA is a great field of virgins for the Elwins of this world.' Friendly as the central Indian people usually were, there was nothing to compare with the enthusiastic hospitality shown to the traveller in the remoter parts of NEFA. The difficulties were great but the splendour of the countryside and the charm of the people were altogether exhilarating.

On my tours I moved as a self-contained unit, taking with me

almost all my food and what little camp equipment was needed. I very rarely had a tent and nearly always slept either in the men's dormitory or in somebody's house. I used, however, to take a couple of tarpaulins with which we would build an open shed somewhere in the middle of the village where I sat during the day. This was rather like having a good seat at a theatre, for from it I could watch the whole varied panorama of village life. I always took a gramophone with me and found it of great value in attracting the people: some tins of sweets quickly created friendship with the children: and my box of mechanical toys, some inherited from Bastar days, quickly broke down any shyness or suspicion.

The great thing was that I was forced to travel on foot or occasionally by pony. To tour in a jeep is to get a completely superficial picture of the people. When you have to walk slowly from village to village you have a chance of getting to know them. On several tours I did not see a government official for weeks at a time. I was entirely on my own and I always travelled without any kind of escort. In fact, I have found, in all these years, that I have never needed one.

Although I love touring, I do puff and pant a bit going up the hills, and this amuses the tribal people with me.

One day going up a mountain in Manipur, a kindly English-speaking Naga boy who was a little ahead of me, turned round and said, 'This must be a frightful ordeal, sir, for a fat old man like you.' And Membas up in Gelling, near the Tibetan border, described me as going along making a noise like an aeroplane. We must remember that among the tribes words like fat or old are complimentary. Fat implies potency and substance; age is always venerated—and anyone over forty is old.

Once, travelling in the Sherdukpen country, as I was going along a lovely wooded valley, my pony suddenly leapt into the air for no apparent reason and hurled me to the ground. I was smoking at the time and everyone was impressed by the fact that I kept my cigar in position and alight. I came down rather heavily, but nothing was broken, though I got an enormous bruise on my rump and had to be carried to the nearest outpost. When I asked what had frightened the pony, the Sherdukpens beamingly explained that there was a ghost living in a tree

under which I passed and that he usually threw people off horses when they went below it.

'But you might have warned me,' I complained.

'No,' they said, 'we wanted to see whether he would dare to frighten you just like anyone else.'

Later it was suggested that the place should be named Elwin's Fall, but I discouraged the kindly thought for fear that it might be misconstrued.

Another time Lila and I once flew to Pasighat and, as the plane came down, I was gratified to see a very large crowd waiting and thought to myself what a proper spirit this showed. We landed and came out to face an enthusiastic mob of all the local officials and many Abors, but when they saw us there was an appreciable drop in temperature.

'We thought,' they told us, 'that you were a load of Yorkshire pigs.'

I will now give brief descriptions of a few of the more important of my tours, for they gave me the things I most cherish—affectionate, friendly people; the beauty of mountains; excitement and variety; and a sense of doing something worth while.

II

A Pilgrimage to Tawang

Tawang, with its great monastery in a beautiful upland valley in a corner between Bhutan and Tibet, came into world-news as the first place of importance visited by the Dalai Lama, when he sought political asylum in India four years ago. It came again, more tragically, into the headlines when it was captured by the Chinese and yet again as the scene of rejoicing when it was reoccupied by its Lamas and the Indian administrators a few weeks later.

Tawang is a long way off, and when I went there the journey had to be made on foot or pony: now a wonderful mountain road makes it accessible. Lila and I went there in May 1956 and, since we covered the exact route taken by the Dalai Lama

and his party when they travelled down to the plains, I will describe our experiences, for he saw the same places and met the same people that we did, though in reverse order.

From Tezpur, where over two hundred journalists gathered to greet the Dalai Lama when he arrived there, we drove through Charduar at the foot of the mountains, and then up the new road towards Bomdi La. The Dalai Lama was able to make the entire journey between Charduar and Bomdi La by jeep, but when we went we were only able to drive about twenty-eight miles, in the course of which we climbed 8,000 feet, to the road-head, after which we went on foot and pony along a rather narrow bridlepath. It was not an easy journey, for to those unaccustomed to riding on the little mountain ponies, their habit of walking on the extreme edge of precipices (and there are many of them) is somewhat alarming; we were badly bitten by dimdam flies, horrid insects whose bites leave poisoned and itching sores; and before long our leg-muscles began to ache excruciatingly. But the path led us through such lovely scenery, valley and stream and hill, with sacred shrines to bless us on our way, that we quickly forgot the discomforts. The dust and tumult of mechanized transport were left behind us; ahead was pilgrimage among the snow mountains and the holy places.

This is, in fact, one of the most memorable adventures that NEFA has to offer.

There is first the beauty of the countryside—the distant mountains white with snow, the nearer hills dressed in pine, oak and fir; the smell of the pines; the waterfalls and streams; the banks carpeted with wild strawberries; the great displays of rhododendrons and a score of other multicoloured flowers. The journey over the Se La is unforgettable; haunted, mysterious, remote, the great Pass gives the authentic thrill—distance and height are forgotten in wonder. And as you descend, there are the flowers. If there is a Paradise in NEFA, this is it, this is it, this is it.

At Bomdi La, which we reached after a two days' journey, we bought dress suitable for our pilgrimage. I had a brown silk shirt and a long dark coat to the ankles with a red sash and a fine fur hat; Lila had a red shirt, a black coat, an apron

decorated with gay brocade, ornamental boots, and a charming, brilliantly coloured little hat which was perched on the side of her head—she looked enchanting.

From Bomdi La, escorted by a very dear friend, R. S. Nag, who was then Political Officer, and a fine young anthropologist, Sachin Roy, we went along a river valley to Dirang, eighteen miles away, which is one of the prettiest places I have ever seen. Monpa houses are substantial two-story stone buildings, and here they are perched picturesquely on a number of small hills between which runs a lovely little stream of crystal-clear water. There are several Buddhist temples and other buildings which house prayer-wheels and grindstones worked by water. The great prayer-wheels, like the flags fluttering in the breeze, repeat endlessly (if inaudibly) the sacred words OM MANI PADME HUM.

In the middle of the village is an imposing old fort (*dzong*) and above it is a temple where we made our camp. This is a fine building with an upper story containing many small images of the Buddha and a little library in which Lila and I were accommodated. Below there was another room with some large images where the rest of our party stayed. It was refreshing to be in a really natural religious environment, in a temple where you could put up your camp-bed and sleep under the gentle and compassionate gaze of the statues. In Buddhism religion is not a thing apart from life: it is a part of it.

At Dirang we first met the Abbot of Tawang who happened to be staying there on his way to his monastery. This Abbot is one of the few real saints that one may meet in a lifetime. Looking at him, the phrase 'the beauty of holiness' came into my mind. Gentle, courteous, simple, luminous with inner joy, he is a completely charming personality and every time I met him I felt the better for it.

A mile or so outside Dirang we experienced the first of the welcomes with which the local people greet visitors. There were the Head Lama and his band of trumpeters (some of the trumpets were seven or eight feet long) and drummers, and with him was a large crowd of local officials, Chiefs and delightful school-children, all in their own attractive dress, very pretty and charming children too. At every village along the way the

procedure was the same. We were met by the local dignitaries, generally with a band. Each garlanded us with a white scarf and we gave scarves in return. Then they led us in procession to a small tent, tastefully decorated with flowers, in which a number of seats covered with brightly-coloured carpets or saddle-cloths awaited us. There were low tables and on them silver, china or wooden cups. Sometimes there was a bowl of walnuts or wild strawberries. Then the wife of the leading inhabitant filled the cups with butter-tea—an alarming concoction of tea, salt and butter—and raised them one by one first to my lips and to my wife's and then to the rest of the company in strict order of precedence. I myself usually only touched the cup with my lips, for I found the smell of the often rancid butter overwhelming, but everybody else enjoyed it and some drank as many as eight cups in succession. After the tea, we were often offered rice-spirit, one of the strongest drinks you can get, rather like vodka.

This was sometimes a real embarrassment, especially when offered early in the morning and then repeated in village after village throughout the day. But we learnt that if we dipped one finger in the bowl and sprinkled a little of the spirit three times in honour of the Lord Buddha, it was not necessary to drink it. Occasionally, however, the woman offering the drink would catch you by the ear and, tilting up your head, force the fiery spirit down your throat; sometimes she would sit in your lap to do so. I had heard that this was done by the prettiest girl in the village but, in my case, perhaps because I was chaperoned by Lila, I always got old ladies.

These Monpa people are singularly courteous, gentle and friendly. They take off their hats and, holding them between their hands, make a little bow at every word you speak. They still, in some places, put out their tongues by way of greeting. In my whole tour I never heard a child crying and I do not remember hearing a single angry word.

As we continued our march from Dirang the country got more and more beautiful, the mountains became higher, snow peaks appeared, and now as we approached any village people lit fires of aromatic leaves and branches to greet us. At Senzedzong, where the Dalai Lama halted on his journey, we

had a wonderful reception on a broad plateau under the towering Se La mountains. It was a perfect day and the colour, the beauty of the scenery, the picturesque delightful people, the trumpets, the dignified ceremonial were unforgettable.

Now we had to cross the Se La Pass, over 14,000 feet high. We had been warned that the way was steep, that we should not be able to breathe, that it was sure to rain. And alas, rain it did, both on our way up and our way back but, though we could not see the distant views, it was a memorable climb. At the top, where we had a picnic lunch, there are twin lakes or tarns which are called the 'Eyes of God'.

When we reached our little camp by a stream, half-way down the other side, we found our tent had been made by the Monpas into a sort of bower of flowers, most beautifully done.

But flowers do not keep out the cold. It was the smallest tent I have ever been in; it was pouring with rain, and at about 12,000 feet we had the coldest night I had known for a long while. But at sunset Lila and I had a wonderful time picking wild strawberries.

Then we went on for another twenty miles to Tawang. From a distance of fifteen miles we got the first view of the great monastery riding like a ship on its hillside, 10,000 feet above sea level, and as we approached we had a dozen receptions in little villages along the way. As we drew nearer Tawang, the Prior and some of the senior monks in their splendid robes and impressive hats of yellow cloth came three miles out to meet us. The following day, May the 24th, Buddha Purnima, 2,500th anniversary of the birth of the Buddha, we visited the monastery: there could not have been a more auspicious moment.

We were met at the entrance of the monastery by the Prior and other monks; scarves were exchanged; trumpets were blown, and we walked slowly through a fantastic medley of buildings into the great courtyard and the main temple, which with its great statue and hundreds of smaller images is the centre of an ardent devotion, of the Mahayana type of Buddhism with strong Tantric elements. Fantastic images of demons, dignified images of great saints and Rinpoches (holy men who have been reincarnated in another birth), scrolls, flags, temple-

hangings, bells and lights, human thigh-bones used as trumpets, rich carpets, give the temple, which tradition decrees should always be illuminated by artificial light, a rich and sombre magnificence.

As it was Buddha Purnima day, most of the monks were sitting in long rows in the temple chanting prayers. We went round offering scarves to the principal images. The temple on this day was lit by a thousand lamps and decorated with some remarkable pictures made on the ground with coloured butter. There were also a thousand little Buddhas made of butter round the walls.

Later we went to the very fine library whose great treasure is the Getompa, eight large volumes, three of which are lettered in gold. There are also copies of the other main Buddhist scriptures, some printed and some handwritten, over seven hundred books in all. This may not sound very much, but a monastic book is a real book, about the size of half a dozen ordinary books of this careless modern world. The Lamas have a great reverence for knowledge, even though many of them are not themselves learned. Every temple has its sacred books which are carried in procession round the village on festal days. Books are worshipped, even if they are not read. In the library we were entertained to some strange-tasting but pleasant dishes and, of course, the butter-tea, and from the balcony we watched the dances performed in honour of the festival. The most moving of these was the Thutotdam, the dance of the king and queen of death, which reminds the spectators that death awaits every man and that they must not, therefore, be too much attached to worldly existence.

The monastery awoke nostalgic memories of Oxford or even, for I am a broadminded person, of Cambridge. There was the same casual atmosphere which conceals so much dignity and protocol. There were the little narrow streets dividing the tall houses where the monks had their cells. There was the dignified common-room where the leading Lamas met to decide monastic policy and affairs. There was a great kitchen, and I especially noticed the enormous tea-pots in which the Lamas make their butter-tea. The courtyards were paved and there were many horses about. In a basement below the library was

a large room in which were kept the great boxes containing the masks and elaborate dresses used for ceremonial dances, and even a printing-press. Printing was a laborious business. Books here are in the shape of long narrow rectangles and every page had to be carved separately on wooden blocks.

This pilgrimage, as I have always called it, meant something much more to me than the ordinary official tour. I had always been interested in Buddhism and inspired by much of its teaching: now it became real to me. These few weeks brought a definite change in my life, a step forward in spiritual realization.

III

A Scramble among the Tagins

Shortly before I came to Shillong the Tagins of the far north had attacked a detachment of Assam Rifles and their porters at a place called Achingmori and killed many of them. Military operations had to be mounted against the turbulent tribesmen, but they were soon over, and the people settled down fairly quickly. In March 1955 I decided to visit the Tagins, although their country was then difficult and wild.

The tour began rather inauspiciously. We had to fly from Jorhat to a remote place far away in the hills and the morning of our departure was lean and hungry, overshadowed by great clouds. We were to go in the usual old Dakota which was fortunately driven (as our people say) by the Wing-Commander himself. When we arrived at the airstrip we found him already in a rather bad temper. The aircraft was overloaded, there was something wrong with the battery and the engine was making a queer noise, as if the sprockets were not running true with the differential gear. 'She wheezes like an old woman,' he muttered, reducing my already low morale. When we got in we found that half the aircraft was full to the brim with sacks of rice, tin boxes and so on, all of which looked as if they would slide down on top of us if we tilted up. However, we strapped ourselves in and the Wing-Commander took off. As we went down the airstrip someone retracted the wheels while we were still on the

ground and our momentum was still weak. The pilot just managed to get us into the air and, flying very low, slowly turned and circled three times over the airport. I thought that this was because we were too heavily loaded but he thought that the right tyre had burst. The radio-operator came in hurriedly and scrabbled at our belts. 'Tighter, tighter,' he said, just like my headmaster when he bent me over before a beating.

We came down safely, however, and for a few moments there was complete silence. Then the cockpit door swung open and such a stream of profanity poured out that I thought the fuel would catch fire. As I was listening to this with reverence, the pilot appeared, his face bathed with perspiration, and said, 'That's the nearest to death you bastards have ever been.' Later, one of the crew told me that on such occasions, though the crew may escape, the passengers were *always* killed.

The pilot now took a firm line and insisted on transferring to another aircraft and this time we had a good quick flight to make a perfect landing at our destination.

From there I went first into the lonely and almost unvisited Sipi valley. The track north at the time was so bad that we sometimes had to go on our hands and knees and, unlike other parts of NEFA, there were no dormitories and the houses were so small and crowded that, although I did sometimes stay in them, I found that my presence was rather an embarrassment. I had no tent and only two tarpaulins. We used to make a little hut, sometimes having to cut away part of the hillside to get a flat piece of ground, and with one tarpaulin on the floor and the other above me I used to crouch like a frog in the pouring rain which even in March fell upon us relentlessly.

Our first march of twelve miles, which took us over eight hours, up to a little camp by the Sipi river, was an appropriate introduction to what we were in for. We pushed our way up and down, down and up, along a narrow slippery track, part of it on a slant so that you could not put your feet comfortably on the ground, along the right bank of the Subansiri. There seemed no end to it, the slither down, the clamber up. Twice I fell through the track up to my waist. Hundreds of leeches reared their lithe bodies on the ground baring their anti-coagulant jaws, great spiders the size of your hand hung from above,

dimdams buzzed like jet fighters round our heads. On this first day I picked forty-eight leeches off my person, finding them inside my socks, deep in my boots, on my arms and even in my hair.

The Sipi river flows through a narrow valley, flanked by steep, heavily-wooded hills, and the Tagin villages are mostly in hollows well below the summits, and those I visited were well watered. They were small, with not more than six to eight houses, though each house had at least four hearths and accommodated a fairly large number of people. The granaries were built a short distance away as a protection against fire.

There was at first some apprehension that I had come to make further inquiries about the Achingmori tragedy. At a remote village at the very end of the valley, the leaders did not come to see me for a considerable time, though I was immediately surrounded by a large crowd of ordinary people. But presently the Chief, dressed in fine handwoven robes and attended by a small bodyguard, marched up in grim silence. The crowd scattered and we were left face to face. It was an electric moment: for the first time the Chief's eyes rested on, shall we say, a regular subscriber to the *New Statesman*. Here, he said to himself, is civilization. He obviously did not care greatly for what he saw. I could feel him drinking me in—the undistinguished features, the spectacles, the worn-out coat, frayed and baggy trousers, the muddy boots. Is that all, he seemed to say, that they have to offer? He stood upright, motionless, and glowered at me, while he fingered, rather suggestively I thought, his formidable sword. I tried a smile—there was no response. I offered the customary gifts—he waved them aside. I tried the few words I knew—and with a gesture of dignity and scorn he handed me a present, a solitary egg: white and chill! nestled in my palm. I smiled again but even I felt that my smiles had become a thought mechanical. There was obviously nothing for it: I would have to put on my little act, which in my opinion is worth a whole platoon of Assam Rifles as a safety measure. I removed my dentures. There was a roar of interest and excitement from the crowd. I put them back. Another roar. After I had conducted this humiliating performance several times, there was at last a reaction. The Chief's lips

began to twitch, and he finally broke into a hearty laugh. Pointing to his greying hair, he declared, 'I am an old man too,' and soon he was sitting beside me very affably.

But even now not altogether at ease. The Tagins, he knew, had misbehaved and he had clearly made up his mind not to talk. So to every question, he had but one reply: 'I know nothing, I didn't do it.'

When our conversation came round to theology, a subject on which I was hoping, rather optimistically, to obtain some information, this attitude became a little embarrassing.

'Tell me, who is the Supreme Being?' I inquired.

He leapt to his feet, raised his hand to heaven. 'It isn't me, I swear it.'

'But who created the world?'

'I have no idea. But I didn't do it. It was before my time.'

'And what about the Sun and Moon?'

'Not me, not me. I did wipe out a village in my youth, but that was a long time ago. I have done nothing since.'

But I think that by the time I left he was happy and content, and he was certainly almost vociferous in his demands for a fuller development of the area.

One of the most distressing features in the life of these people was a form of dermatitis, which begins as a patch of ringworm and develops into a generalized scaly desquamation of the skin of the entire body. The skin turns a white or silvery colour and flakes off: I saw men scraping themselves with knives to remove the scales; they were always restless with the constant itch and irritation. This disfiguring and distressing affliction has now been diagnosed as *tinea imbricata*, and the NEFA doctors are making it their special care to treat it.

After my visit to the Tagins and the northern Gallongs I returned to Daporijo and then, leaving the regular route, set out on a fantastically difficult cross-country journey down to Ziro, over the great Kamla river and then along the Pein valley.

Although the marches were as hard as anything further north, I found the people much more attractive and cooperative. They were what have long been called Hill Miris, Saraks or Panibotias. They were free of the disturbing skin disease that

afflicted the Tagins; many of them were very good-looking. Some of the women were still wearing their traditional cane-brassières and all had elaborate cane-belts, very carefully woven. They did their hair in rather the same way as the Daflas, with a knot in front and very attractive little cane-hats, sometimes decorated with porcupine quills.

An interesting feature of many villages were the tombs. Some of these had rows of stuffed monkeys with gaping mouths, paws extended, baskets on their backs with tobacco and bits of food which were placed there to assist the ghost as he marched down to the underworld.

My interpreters had their wives with them and we went along stimulated by the constant crackle of matrimonial discord. They were all polygamous. One of them had three wives with him in the camp—he had four altogether, three, he said, to work in the house and one for sex. He hoped for eight and explained that he actually wanted twelve but, owing to the new-fangled ideas of Government, he supposed he would have to be content with less.

This part of the world impressed me with a sense of extreme desolation which was emphasized by the pouring rain and the mist that went with us for almost the whole of our way. The Kamla river, which would ordinarily have been very pretty, looked awe-inspiring as we climbed down the hill to cross it by a rickety cane bridge. And the last lap of the journey was through a great forest with rain dripping drearily from the branches of its trees.

This was perhaps the most exacting tour I have ever done. I can't say that I had enjoyed it, but I shall always be glad that I did it.

IV

Promenades in Siang

There is nothing to compare with Siang, and the four long tours I have made in this delectable Division stand out beyond comparison with any others. On the first of them, in January

1955, I went from Along down to Pangin and then up the left bank of the Siang river to Shimong, crossed by bamboo bridge to Karko and then back to Along along the right bank.

This was my first long tour in the non-Naga part of the frontier and, though it was physically exhausting, I found it stimulating and exhilarating. In the villages we were as usual accommodated in the boys' dormitory, a long and very draughty building with a low roof. Down one side was a series of pigsties, with little platforms above them, for use as lavatories: rich men value the privilege of keeping their pigs in places where they receive such ample nourishment. In the dormitories we were surrounded by a perpetual crowd; boys climbed into the rafters and looked down, in some places we were even watched by people peering up through cracks in the floor. Every evening the girls assembled for a dance, which often went on till long past midnight.

Victor was with us, and my eldest son Kumar, and the invaluable Sundarlal. Bhajan did the cooking and we had Hari-charan as chaprasi. A very good domestic team. For interpreter I had two of the Political interpreters in their red coats, Tapang Taki and Orin Modi, two charming people who added much to the success of the tour.

Kumar, then about fourteen, was in tremendous form; he had his Abor dao (a sort of hatchet) and a spear and made great friends with Tapang and Orin, as well as with many of the villagers. He looked after the first-aid, tying up many wounds and distributing simple medicines. He played the gramophone to frequent and admiring crowds. And all the time he was in the highest spirits. He was able to watch an interesting airdrop and was very excited at seeing the parachutes billowing down, and thoroughly enjoyed balancing himself across Abor bridges. He fell a dozen times on every march, but was light enough to do himself no damage. Victor, however, had a number of nasty falls, but on the marches I got through unscathed. One night, however, I went down into a deep ditch among rocks and sprained my ankle. Fortunately we only had forty miles more to walk.

My next visit, now six years ago, was to the very isolated Bori area.

After flying part of the way, with two dozen goats as fellow-passengers, I set out on foot with my little party into the Bori villages, a very interesting and picturesque part of the world, about which nothing has so far been written. The Boris are Abors in the sense that they speak the same language, but in dress and appearance they are distinctive. They are enthusiastic weavers and they make an attractive skirt, coat and cloak of wool which is brought down from the north. Both men and women cut their hair in a fringe across the forehead and keep it long behind and it looks unusually attractive. The children, and especially the little girls, were some of the most beautiful I have ever seen.

To my mind, the most alarming things on this tour were the suspension-bridges. These are bamboo tubes which are slung across the rivers, sometimes strengthened by a couple of wire-ropes supplied by Government and sometimes not. You have to balance on a narrow strip of cane or wire and support yourself by cane-ropes on either side. The entire tube is enclosed by bits of cane or bamboo but there are many gaps and the whole thing looks extremely fragile. When there is a strong wind, a bridge may wriggle like a snake. In this part of the world it is as important to be an acrobat as an anthropologist!

Above the valleys rise the splendid snow-covered peaks of the Pari mountains and in many places we had fine views, almost like Switzerland. Unhappily, after a few days the weather turned against us and the beauty of the country was lost in constant cloud and mist. It also began to rain.

In the Bori country we made our camp as elsewhere in the boys' dormitories, which here are called bangos. The bango is a long draughty building with a floor that feels as if it may collapse any moment, and has a series of hearths down its length. It is used by the villagers as council-house, dormitory and club and all day long there are people sitting round the fire and talking at the top of their voices: the Boris, when excited, speak in a high-pitched monotone and generally three or four of them hold forth at the same time. When they do the din is terrific. 'A Bori's tongue', they say, 'is four yards long.' All the unmarried boys and men sleep round the fire. I generally had my bed in one corner.

We were the first visitors who had stayed in the bangos in this way, in fact only two officers had visited this area before us and they travelled with escorts and halted in well-protected camps. It was interesting that the Bori hardly took any notice of us. There we were among them and they sat all round shouting and yelling, making baskets, getting drunk, quarrelling, without troubling about us at all. This gave us some idea of how they really lived.

Another remarkable thing was how we could, even in this kind of crowded atmosphere (for sometimes there were over a hundred people in the house at once) leave all our things about in perfect safety. There were tea-leaves, sugar, cigarettes, all sorts of things the people would have liked to have, and yet there was no need to lock anything up, for nobody would dream of stealing.

All my life I have had the misfortune to incur the displeasure of the clergy. It was the same in the Bori country. There was no apprehension that we had come to take away their land or impose taxes, as I have found when visiting other remote areas in India. Here the suspicion and fear of us was not political but theological. On entering every village I was greeted with rows of sharp bamboo stakes and gates adorned with a number of symbols—sometimes it was the head of a dead dog—designed to frighten away the evil spirits whom we were certainly bringing with us. I and my party in fact were spiritually toxic—we carried with us the infection of another world. When I tried to buy specimens for my museum the priests announced that if anybody allowed us to take something belonging to him out of the Bori country he would die. There was the strongest possible objection to being photographed, for fear that the subject's soul would be removed by the camera. In one case, when an old man had been sitting with me for some time, his little daughter came screaming that he would be devoured by a Wiyu-spirit if he remained with me longer. She emphasized her remarks by throwing a heavy piece of iron and a block of wood at him. In some villages we were warned that the names of gods and spirits must not be taken inside a building and so our inquiries had to be conducted out of doors.

Such fears have now largely disappeared. Here were people

who were still in the childhood of the race. Many of them had never struck a match; they had not seen a watch and did not know what it was. They had the most intense curiosity about everything we had, examined with great care the construction of a chair or table and were fascinated by our cooking arrangements. The one thing in which they had lost interest was the aeroplane, the 'Government cart', so often passing overhead that they no longer bothered to look up.

There was still slavery in this area, though the Administration was gradually liberating the slaves and has now succeeded in liberating nearly all of them. The slaves were often well treated, and I got to know a number of them and wrote down their stories. I brought back with me a dear old Tagin woman, who had been captured as a slave when very young and had been sold again and again to members of different tribes. She had a dream about her deliverance, that she went into a hole in the ground and travelled in the great darkness for many weary miles 'until she came out into a place of light, to the presence of the Sun-Moon God'. I brought her back to Along and she was liberated; I have told her story in *A Philosophy for NEFA*.

At the beginning of 1958 I went, with Kumar and my usual small party, to Tuting in the extreme north of Siang for a wonderful seven weeks' tour. We went first down the right bank of the Siang river, visiting the villages of the Ashings as far as lovely Bomdo where we crossed the river on an improvised bamboo raft, and then worked north again through the Shimong area to the east, and finally up the sacred, fertile and beautiful Yang Sang Chu valley as far as Mankhota. On our return to Tuting we were held up by bad weather for ten days and used part of the time to visit Gelling and the Kepang La which forms the boundary between India and Tibet.

This is one of the most fascinating and exciting parts of NEFA; the scenery, when it is not hidden by cloud and rain, is superb; the people are charming, hospitable and photogenic: tribal institutions still retain their vitality. It is a country of song and dance, of hard enthusiastic work, of fine spinning and weaving, and of laughing, pretty children.

We crossed the Siang river on bamboo rafts, a greater adventure than it sounds, for the Abors are afraid of the rivers that

are one of the most notable features of their territory, for they are believed to be haunted by dangerous spirits, the Nippongs, who drag men down into the water, and a number of drowning tragedies in the past had discouraged them from either fishing or crossing the river by boat or raft. It was, therefore, by no means easy to persuade the Ashings to help us make the raft at Bomdo and only one or two of them would venture on it, although scores of people gathered at the bank to watch the hazardous crossing. At Tuting, however, a very fine raft was constructed by a Memba who had learnt to use a primitive kind of oar. It could accommodate eleven persons and there was a comfortable seat with a prayer-flag at the prow. On the bank the Abors busied themselves in offering sacrifices for our safe crossing and the Membas and Khambas erected a sapling decorated with prayer-flags.

In October of the same year I made another long tour, of six weeks, in north-west Siang, going first to Mechuka and then working down through the Ramo, Pailibo and Bori areas back to Along.

The valley here is of great beauty. I had visited Mechuka before for a few hours but a visit only to the outpost gives no idea of the scenery and the possibilities of this lovely valley surrounded by pine-covered hills which give way to the snow-covered high ranges beyond.

We went on to the Ramo-Pailibo area, a strange and unique part of the world. The mountains are formidable and the tracks in the main are very difficult. The Niying Shi river between Mechuka and Tato is so hemmed in by steep and towering hills that the traveller feels as if he is passing through a deep gorge and after a time has a sense of claustrophobia. This is a country where formerly there were human sacrifices, where slaves were captured and sold, hostages kept in the stocks, and suspicion and hostility ruled the day: but it is a very friendly part of the world now. In one village, a kindly Pailibo presented me with a piece of monkey meat, but to my disappointment my cook rejected it indignantly. He gave it to one of my interpreters who fell seriously ill after eating it, for it had been killed with a poisoned arrow, and was insufficiently cooked to counteract the aconite.

My great love in the Abor country was the Siang river. This marvellous stream, which rises as the Tsang-Po far away in Tibet, enters India in the extreme north and then flows down to enter the plains at Pasighat and then merge in the mighty Brahmaputra. I have often flown along the course of the Siang and have at different times walked its entire length from Komsing to Tuting and beyond. I have also travelled along two of its enticingly beautiful tributaries, the Yang Sang Chu in the far north and the Siyom.

If all the pens that ever poets held were to get to work on it, I doubt if they could digest into words the fascination of this wonderful river, so exquisite, so mysterious, so varied in its charms; at one point flowing through gently sloping woods, at another forcing its way through high gorges. Its colour is always changing and when you see it shrouded in gentle mist against a background of snow-mountains towering in the distance, it is one of the loveliest sights that can meet the eye of man. The Siang is a hard mistress and sometimes exhausted me so completely that I came to think of it as the river of no return. Indeed, I would be happy one day to lay my body beside its waters.

V

The Strange Fascination of Lohit

The people of Lohit have always fascinated me and I do not know why I have not spent more time among them, even though I did make two long tours among the Mishmis. I never, however, made my way on foot up the Lohit valley to Walong although, as I shall describe, I went up by plane. I also visited the Khampis several times and particularly my 1959 visit to their villages (when Wasant came with me) was most rewarding. It was there that I saw village Buddhism at its simplest and best. I took a number of bronze Buddhas to present to the little temples and everywhere was welcomed with most touching enthusiasm. I was given the honorable title of Phradayaka by the monks of Ningro.

My very first visit to the Division was with Rashid Yusuf Ali, one of the most remarkable (though as yet unrecognized) men that I have ever met. We went at the height of the rains, plunging on elephants through trackless jungle in search of a ruined copper temple. This slightly lunatic, fruitless yet altogether worthwhile adventure was typical of Rashid—I would like to think it was typical of me also, but I am not sure: on my own I am afraid I should have waited for the rain to stop.

My first Mishmi tour was across country from Tezu to Roing, nothing very adventurous, but at that time, in November 1955, it was possible in three weeks to see real Mishmi life there without marching hundreds of miles and climbing impossible mountains, though the country was very rough.

There is always a special thrill in one's first visit to a new tribe, and in this case I was a little apprehensive, for all previous travellers had stressed how 'difficult' the Mishmis were and how unpleasant and unattractive. I can only say I fell in love with them at once. Our first village was inhabited by Taraon (or Digaru) Mishmis and the men wore their hair tied in a knot on the top of the head and the women had theirs in a fantastic piled-up style which would attract admiring attention anywhere.

I stayed throughout the tour in Mishmi houses, some of which are very large, containing a number of related families. You must imagine a long low building raised on poles above the ground, with an entrance and veranda at each end. A corridor runs down one side and off this open a number of small rooms, each for a separate family or, where the owner of the house has several wives, each for a different wife and her children. Visitors enter by the eastern door, and it is correct for you to go and sit by the fire in complete silence for a few minutes before doing anything. Then you are given the first room as you enter, for this is maintained as a guest-room: it even has its own lavatory above the pigsty. The rooms were always clean and tidy and for the first time since I came to NEFA I managed to avoid the bites of fleas, though there was an alarming number of hornets. The only disadvantage for a tall person like myself was that the roof was so low that I had to stoop the whole time I was indoors. My guest-room was always crowded with people,

young and old of both sexes, and I had as much privacy as a rare fish has in an aquarium. But the Mishmis have no idea of privacy; at night husbands and wives lay in couples all round us and no one seemed to be embarrassed.

Some Mishmis are so lazy that they do not bother to clear the ground even round their houses and the jungle comes right up to the door. In front of the house is often an elaborate tomb, with a spire and flags flying, and on the walls inside are racks of the skulls of animals. Every animal ever taken in the chase or offered at a ceremonial feast is represented here. The Mishmis never did head-hunting in the ordinary way: what they went in for was hair-hunting and thumb-hunting. When they killed an enemy, they cut off the thumb of the right hand, 'the hand with which you eat your food', and a tuft of hair, and brought these trophies home in triumph. After a special celebration, the hair was hung above the door and the thumb buried before it.

The first ten days of the tour was among these Taraon Mishmis, who are the most picturesque and handsome. Their weaving is good and I was able to collect a number of beautiful textiles. They are devoted to tobacco and both men and women always had very long brass or silver pipes in their mouths. They are almost the only people in NEFA who do not tattoo and do not chew betel, and most of them had lovely white teeth.

The second ten days was spent among the Idu Mishmis, a tougher and more warlike group, separated from the Taraons by the Paya river. At our first village we were a little disconcerted; the people did not seem friendly; our interpreter was lying dead drunk out in the jungle; the local Chief did not come near us. But things warmed up later, and I was soon liking the Idus almost as much as the Taraons. They are rather like Baigas, very wild and shaggy, real jungle folk, with their poisoned arrows and a cross-bow which they fire by a trigger like a gun. The weaving of the Idus is also good and one day a party of them came to our camp from a village many days distant towards the frontier selling cloth of excellent quality and pattern. Some of them wear bright-coloured woollen coats adorned with crosses, a circumstance which in the last century had made Father Krick believe that they had been converted to Christianity long ago and had then reverted.

This is the country of wild elephants, who sometimes kill people and often spoil the crops. I saw a man in the Tezu hospital who had been tossed by one of them two years before and had not yet fully recovered. Anyone killed by a wild elephant, however, goes to the Land of the Sun, not the ordinary subterranean Land of the Dead, and has every comfort there. It is, therefore, a not undesirable death.

One year Lila went with me on a long and very arduous tour of the Khamlang valley. We were seen off at Tezu by the Political Officer, Uma Sharma, one of the best of men, courteous, gentle and courageous, and we first passed through a few Khampti villages and then went into the lonely valley running up into the mountains.

The Khamlang valley is a thinly populated and little-explored area of great beauty running eastward from Wakro up to the snow-line. It is sparsely inhabited by the Miju or Kaman Mishmis; there are fewer than fifty houses in the entire valley and I estimated the population at about five hundred. I was able to visit every village except two, most of the settlements consisting of only one to four houses. The tracks were as bad as anything I have met in NEFA, and most of the villages are placed high on the hills and there are long and steep climbs up to them. The countryside is further divided by many streams which in the rains become impassable for days at a time.

The Kaman Mishmis are an attractive people, quiet and friendly, and in this area, where they have largely retained their own beautiful dress and ornaments, they look delightful. Their weaving is among the finest in NEFA and is of extraordinary variety; we hardly ever saw two articles with exactly the same pattern. Their legends attribute the origin of these designs to butterflies, fish and snakes, whose markings they have copied, and there are other designs representing houses, human figures and even aeroplanes.

Our first halt was at Choukham and we then continued our journey on elephants up to the lonely outpost of Wakro at the entrance of the Khamlang valley. This first part of the journey was rather dreary, but we saw one or two Buddhist

temples on the way, tumbledown buildings housing carvings of surprising beauty.

Looking up the valley we received an impression of incomparably wild scenery shrouded in mist and cloud. We had Tapan Kumar Barua, who has gone with me on a number of tours, to escort us and an excellent Mishmi interpreter, Somiya, and as we had been warned that the villages were very small, we for once took a tent. We sent the elephants home and proceeded on foot.

Our first village was rather discouraging, for we found it under a taboo and were not allowed to go in or see anybody. We camped outside in the jungle and were kept awake by the screams of wild elephants during the night. The next village, however, was high up among the hills, with a superb view of snow-clad mountains rising into a blue sky. The camp was ideally placed on the side of a hill and had views on three sides, and here the people, dressed in a fantastic variety of textiles, nearly all beautiful, were most friendly.

Here, Lila began to indulge her lifelong passion for washing people. There was a small waterfall and a pool nearby, and Lila collected the children (who were quite exceptionally dirty) and began a tremendous soaping and scrubbing. Presently some older girls and boys came to be washed too. Later, one of the boys said that it was an interesting experience, but not one that he would like to have repeated.

We travelled almost to the end of the valley, at least as far as we saw any people living, and then crossed the river, Lila washing people along the way and catching fish in the streams—she got some very fine three-inchers. Everywhere we went we found goitre and the Mishmis here were much poorer than those I had seen before.

At a village called Glao we found a fine lake among the hills. By now I was feeling rather heroic, for there was no evidence that anybody had been before us. But at Glao we discovered that Kingdon-Ward had long ago camped there for a whole week. In fact, in spite of exploring some very wild places, I have never been able to feel really heroic in NEFA. I have always been put down by either Kingdon-Ward or Peter James, a very popular Political Officer, now in tea, of the old days.

No matter where I went, or how many miles I heaved myself over the mountains in northern Siang, everywhere I found that James Migam, as the Abors called him, had been before me, and not only had been before me but had been very much better. 'James Migam', they would say severely, 'gave us a mithun. James Migam danced all night. James Migam drank all the rice-beer we gave him.' I had to say that I was afraid I was not James Migam and just couldn't keep up with him.

The lake at Glao was full of fish but none of the Mishmis were willing to try to catch them. For eleven years before two boys and two girls had gone out on a raft and had never returned. It was said that they had been dragged below the water by the goddess of the lake.

On this tour I was, in addition to my general study of the needs of the people, specially interested in collecting textiles and discovering the meaning of their patterns. This was not very easy, for the Kaman Mishmis are not very free in their information. Everyone, however, told me that if I would persevere, I should find a very great authority, an old Mishmi, who knew everything. When we did finally discover him, I was thrilled, collected my assistants and rushed to greet him with my little note-book. Unfortunately he turned out to be deaf and dumb.

The only time, I am ashamed to say, that I went up the Lohit was by plane. Khemlal Rathee went with me and it was most exciting. From Jorhat there is first a quiet trip to Tezu when you pass over a large number of tea gardens and you realize how beautifully laid out these are. The country below looks like a chess-board. We flew over Tezu fairly high and then went up the Lohit valley to Haiyuliang. The scenery got grander and grander as we went along and more and more snow-mountains came into view. The path from Haiyuliang to Changwinty did not look difficult and I wished that I was walking along it and meeting the people instead of flying above it, even though I would have missed the scenery. We passed Changwinty and looked up the desolate valley which stretches to the snows beyond it and then turned towards Walong and Kibithu. The landing at Walong is very tricky and at one moment it looked as if we were flying straight into

the hillside. The airstrip had been used for air-dropping and was pitted with holes so that when we came down we bumped along like a kangaroo. We were in some apprehension as to how we were to take off, but we managed it by revving up violently and going almost straight up into the air.

VI

Visits to Tirap

I have made many visits to Tirap, the most south-easterly of the NEFA Divisions, but two of my tours remain specially in my memory, for they were of four or five weeks each and took me into what was at that time little-explored territory. I first went to the Wancho area in November 1954, and was received everywhere with great friendliness and hospitality, though some of these villages had not been visited for a long time. At Pomau, a song was sung about my coming:

The sahib who lives in Shillong
Has flown like a maina bird to these high hills
And has perched on a tree in our village.
Our minds are full of happiness.
As the fish swim up the little streams from the great river,
The sahib has come from the plains to our high hills,
And our minds are full of happiness.

Although very few visitors, at that date, had gone into the Wancho hills, the nearer Wanchos themselves had for a hundred years been visiting the plains and this had led to a greater degree of acculturation than, for example, in the neighbouring Tuensang, now part of Nagaland. Dress had changed to some extent, though not as much as might have been expected: many of the men wore black coats, and some women had abandoned the characteristic and very pretty hand-woven skirt and were putting on a slightly broader piece of dirty mill-cloth. But many others in the interior retained their traditional, very becoming, dress and ornaments; most of the young boys and girls lived naked, except for their beads, their headdress and their flowers. The chief effect of contact with

the outside world had been to make the people self-conscious, and when we entered a village all the women, and some even of the men, hastily draped themselves from head to foot in bedsheets. At Longphong, the women covered their heads and most of their faces, leaving only their eyes peeping out: one might have been in Arabia. This habit is not only most unaesthetic, but the moral effect of self-consciousness cannot be good.

There were many quaint and incongruous things—such as a trilby hat perched above a splendid array of beads. The Wancho men always wear something at the back of the head, round which the hair is wound. This, traditionally, is a piece of wood, which may be carved with human heads or other designs, or in the shape of a hand, if one is a warrior, or be made in various geometric patterns, and gaily coloured, if one is not. The custom survives, but you may see an old electric torch, a tablespoon, a pencil now used instead. Cartridges are commonly used in the ears, and plugs faced with mirrors: it is amusing to see a boy remove his ear-mirror, do his hair in it, and then replace it. Wancho warriors, who took heads long ago, still wear brass or wooden heads round their necks. On two occasions I saw, on either side of a large brass head, a pair of pink plastic heads, wrenched off dolls purchased in the bazaar: the effect was grimly horrible.

In a house in Lankao, I saw a long string of train-tickets hung up in memory of daring journeys to distant bazaars. In the house of the Chief of Senua, there were decorations of strings of monkey's paws, the beaks of the Great Indian Hornbill and old batteries from an electric torch.

The Wanchos are passionately attached to tea. They had heard that tea is made with a kettle. So they solemnly pour water from a bamboo container into the kettle; then they put the leaves into another bamboo, and pour the water from the kettle back into the bamboo to heat it. The tea emerges stewed and black, and is taken without milk or sugar.

On the other hand, although they brew rice-beer, they were remarkably moderate in their use of it. I did not see a single drunken man, not a single person who was even slightly high, in the course of a month.

But many people were smoking opium. I saw dozens of little poppy plantations, and in some places every house was festooned with bundles of ganja hanging up to dry. The older people were making some attempt to stop the younger generation from opium, but they were not prepared to set an example. The Administration has since made a lot of propaganda to reduce the opium habit.

The memory of my first tour in the Wancho hills of Tirap is of hard climbs over clean open country with great bare hills swept by the wind. Most of the Wancho villages are sited at something like three thousand feet on the tops of hills and for every march we had to climb down to the valley below, walk anything from five to ten miles along the lower ground and then climb up, when we were really tired, another three thousand feet to the next village. But there was magnificence and splendour about this country; you could stand on the top of a hill and see your whole programme mapped out around you, with the grey roofs of the villages you were to visit clustered on the top of the surrounding hills.

Some of the villages were a little dull, but there were two which I shall always remember. The first was Senua, where I had the good fortune of being able to watch the ceremony when the Wanchos send a girl to her husband's village. A party of boys and girls had come to fetch her and they all were decorated in their elaborate finery. They had head-bands of orange beads, brightly coloured cloth, and their hair was full of waving feathers and flowers. The bride was a very pretty little creature, with a fine bead-crown, and obviously happy. She was fortunate enough, they explained, to have slept with her future husband already and so it was not as if she were going to a stranger. I watched her put on her ornaments, while her friends made little parcels of presents. Finally, there was a great procession headed by two old women and followed by the bride and a long line of handmaidens.

Another delightful village was Lonkao. What struck me about this village was its innocence. Most of the boys and girls had very little in the way of clothes and were not in the least self-conscious about it. The morung was commodious, comfortable and clean and we were surrounded night and day

by children, as well as by older boys and girls, some of them very attractive to look at. All day long they played round and in my camp. They did the tug-of-war, using a long creeper, with great gusto and loud cries of excitement. Some of them hopped about on one leg singing little songs. The babies were most attractive with their brass bracelets, cane-armlets and tails of squirrels hanging from their ears. Throughout the Wanchos country the children of the great Chiefs had unusual character and, as I have noticed elsewhere, I was struck by the fact that I hardly ever heard children cry. They are very rough, they fight, tear each other's hair, roll in the dust, are dragged along in the tug-of-war, fall headlong to the ground, but they don't cry. I remember two boys fighting, each with a baby tied to his back, and then it is true that the babies screamed in fright.

On our last day in this captivating village there was a great dance. We were woken very early by the thunder of the drums and all the morning the boys prepared their special decorations. At midday, the dance began. It was an attempt to recapture the old days of head-hunting, to which they all looked back as the time when they were really men. Three groups of gaily decorated Wanchos, armed to the teeth, crept up through the surrounding forest, put out scouts, came forward, retreated, then advanced and discharged their guns. One man got a wooden head which he put in his basket with shouts of triumph. Then they started dancing in a great circle, jogging about and waving guns and spears in the air. Every now and then the boys would let off their guns just behind me to see me jump. This caused pleasure to one and all, though I myself was perhaps less amused than some.

Later I made another long tour (this time Kumar was with me) right along the formidable slopes of the Patkai mountains up to Wakka, then across the Laju through the Hatut Nocte area and the Tangsa villages. Since then splendid roads have been built in the face of almost insuperable difficulties, but at the time of my own tours mechanized transport was not available and to my own great benefit I was forced to walk.

We first went into the Nocte country. The Noctes are a rather derribalized group, who have been in contact with the plains

for centuries, and their dress was deplorable. But their villages were as interesting as any. Here were the skulls ranged in the morungs (village guard-houses), grim reminders of a day when head-hunting was the chief occupation of the people, and many stone pillars in memory of battles long ago.

After passing through the Nocte area, we marched eight miles over very steep and rough hills to Longkhai and were at once in a different world, in the beautiful and highly-coloured land of the remote Wanchos. Now, instead of trilby hats, sleazy singlets and dirty shorts, the pathetic symbols of 'civilization', we had waving plumes, the 'eternally dressed nakedness of the brown skin', ornaments, hand-woven cloth, gleaming brass waist-bands, and the most lovely scenery everywhere.

This is the country of the great Chiefs, who have vast houses, pitch dark inside, containing many wives and handmaidens, and people who are not quite slaves and who have to keep their heads shaven,

In certain parts of Tirap I found that the expression 'Jai Hind' (the common greeting of independent India) was being used as a proper noun to indicate what the simple tribesmen regarded as a person of importance. It would be used, for example, for a visitor from Shillong or Delhi. 'Has the Jai Hind arrived?' the people would inquire, or they would say, 'Please tell this to the Jai Hind.' I thought this was a rather pleasant variation on the usual 'sahib'.

As we went along, the country grew wilder and wilder until we reached the Patkai mountains which divide India from Burma.

For nearly three weeks we marched along the slopes of the Patkai rising from eight to nine thousand feet in a grim unbroken wall against the sky. For almost the whole of this period the mountains were shrouded in cloud and mist, and life got rather dreary with the incessant sunlessness and raw bitter wind. It was not so much the discomfort that was depressing as the fact that the people in such weather draped their beauty in dirty sheets and sat about miserably.

I shall never forget these inhospitable hills, lonely and desolate, with great valleys running up to the main wall between the

bluffs and spurs that descend to the Tirap river. One such valley, which I never saw touched by the sun, was dominated by a village on a forest-clad spur—like something in *Dracula*. This was the fabled home of the dreaded Rangpangs, who until twenty years ago are believed to have practised human sacrifice. We went there and found them quiet and amiable, though rather cagey when it came to discussing their past history.

In the final lap of our journey we entered the Tangsa hills. Tangsa means 'children of Burma' and the people here have traditions of immigration from Burma and still have a decidedly Burmese look about them. They wear their hair in a top-knot and dress in sarongs of a pattern resembling a Scotch plaid. I greatly enjoyed the days spent in their company.

It was a long and interesting tour, full of contrasts—the sophisticated Noctes near the plains, then the delightful Wanchos full of colour and zest for living, then the opium-taking and impoverished people of the Hatut confederacy, and finally the handsome, picturesque Tangsas.

In some of the frontier villages the people had no interest in money, and we had to get our supplies by barter; a box of matches for an egg, a string of beads or hank of yarn for a fowl; tea-leaves for rice. Kumar was specially expert at this and at one time kept a regular shop where we got specimens for our museum when the people would not part with them for money.

It was a long tour, about 160 miles, and we got a little tired towards the end. The last two marches were done in the rain and we finally arrived at a place called Changlang which was on a road, one of our development centres, in a marvellous state of damp and dirt. But we cleaned up and were preparing to spend a quiet night there when suddenly there was the hoot of a car—what a wonderful sound after all those weeks: I remember kissing the bonnet, the rough male kiss of motor transport—and out got Lila with Khemlal Rathee who had come up by Land-Rover to fetch us back. So there was hurried packing and at sunset we went down a very winding road, including a dozen hairpin bends, for Margherita and thus back to Shillong.

VII

On these and other tours in north-eastern India I covered approximately two thousand miles, of which about two hundred and fifty were on elephant and pony and the rest on foot. The physical exertion required was sometimes a little severe, for I was from fifty-two to fifty-seven years old at the time and, though I love getting to the top of things, I am no athlete. I sometimes thought it might have been better if I had come to NEFA when I was thirty and spent these later years among the indulgent hills of Orissa or Bastar. And yet had I done that, I should not have been able to write the books I did about the central Indian tribes, for soon afterwards they changed.

In NEFA I always had to push on. It was difficult to stay, as I used to stay in Orissa, for long periods in one village at a time; there were difficulties about supplies and porters: I was possessed by the desire to explore. It was difficult also to be the Invisible Man which I have always tried to be, for now I was regarded as an official and a rather senior one; altogether too much fuss was made of me and I was an oddity which everyone wanted to observe.

These long tours meant leaving Lila and the children behind. My very first tour of seven weeks in Tuensang was a great strain on Lila, for we had only just come to Shillong: she had few friends in those days, and when I returned I found her weak and ill: nobody had sent me the news that there was anything the matter with her.

I learnt a useful lesson from these tours which underlined something that a wise old Forest Officer had said to me long before. 'I never,' he said, 'send a rebuke to any member of my staff while he is on tour or posted by himself in a lonely place.' I myself have had disturbing letters from time to time, as we all do, when I have been travelling alone, and these upset me far more than they would have done had I been able to discuss them with friends who knew the background. This is another of the dangers of loneliness; if an administrator finds it necessary to give one of his subordinates a rocket it is far better to wait until the latter comes into headquarters. Isolation makes everything more acute.

I enjoyed these tours in NEFA tremendously and learnt a great deal from them. On the way to Tawang I felt purified and strengthened by the beauty of the mountains and chastened by the gentleness and quietness of the people. But I think it was the Tagins who affected me more than any other tribe. I have always tended to romanticize the tribal people, whom it is so easy to love and admire. But among the Tagins there was little but misery and emptiness. Gandhi developed the idea of Daridranarayana, the God of the Poor, the God who appears in each poor man in whose service his worship is fulfilled. Among many tribes, for all their poverty, Daridranarayana appears as a God of beauty and enchantment, but among the Tagins He took the form of the Starved Buddha or the Suffering Servant of Isaiah in whom there was no beauty that we should desire him.

How much we romantics have to learn! To have compassion on the rich and successful, who are often so unhappy; to love and care for the conventional and ordinary; to recognize the importance of the ugly and the dull. For me this was a hard lesson, for my poetic soul delights in the exotic and surprising, and beauty draws me with a single hair.

10

Growth of a 'Philosophy'

*What more felicity can fall to creature
Than to enjoy delight with liberty?*

—Edmund Spenser

I

WHEN Shamrao and I first settled in the Maikal hills we were singularly ill-equipped to be of use to anyone. Shamrao knew something about medicine. I knew a little about gardening but our knowledge, say, of chicken-breeding, which was based on P. G. Wodehouse's *Love among the Chickens*, was typical of our experience of practical realities. At that time, of course, there were no Five-Year Plans, no great schemes for the all-round development of India. Even the handful of social workers who specialized in tribal matters thought mainly in terms of opening small schools and dispensaries.

Our original idea was a mystical rather than a material one, though we hoped to express it in practical terms. We thought that simply by living among the tribes, sharing their life as far as possible and, to some extent, suffering with them, we would make reparation for their long neglect and their treatment by a hard-hearted world. It was a way of becoming part of 'the whole human condition'. It was not, of course, possible for us really to identify ourselves on the physical plane with the poorest Gonds. Even the possession of a wrist-watch or a fountain-pen put us far away from them. On the other hand, we did live, not as a temporary gesture but for a very long time, in houses like their own very simply indeed, suffered from the same anxieties, were bullied, as they were, by Government officials, and were tormented in typical village fashion by

malaria. We felt that even this small attempt towards identification would mean something and I think that there is no doubt that it did touch the hearts of many thousands of tribesmen who realized that, impractical as we were, we were thinking about them and showing them affection.

Psychologically at least, I think we were able to bring them a new spirit and a new hope, for they were very crushed when we first settled among them.

We were not, of course, content with this. We opened schools and started a dispensary where Shamrao in time became famous, people coming fifty, even a hundred, miles to consult him. We were able to help a large number of individuals by acting as peace-makers in their disputes, assisting them when they got into trouble with officials and by our advice when they were dragged to court. We did what little we could, and slowly began to learn the practical needs of village life.

One of the things that meant a great deal to us was the opening of our refuge for lepers, small as it was. At that time the chaulmogra medicines available for the treatment of leprosy were not very effective, but we thought that at least we could make a place where these unfortunate people could live fairly comfortably and in security, and at the same time we might check the spread of the disease by containing it in one colony. Even at this time leprosy was regarded with something of the horror that it inherited from the Dark Ages, and the opening of this home was for us ourselves a special symbol of concern and love. We kept it going for about a quarter of a century and, as time went on, learnt the new method of sulphone treatment.

In those first years our policy, if we can dignify it by that term, was partly to encourage the people by simple everyday acts of kindness, but also to rouse them to a sense of their rights—for we early saw that any real progress was in their own hands. We fought many battles with the police, forest officials, merchants and others on their behalf, and so taught them in time to fight for themselves. This made us very unpopular with most of the non-tribals, who did not hesitate to spread every sort of scandal about us and, what was even more dangerous, told the villagers that our medicines were diluted with water

drawn by untouchables, that we were planning to convert them to Christianity and that we would send their boys and girls away to institutions in the cities. It was only when, fortunately, a Sub-Inspector of Police got gonorrhoea and Shamrao cured him, that the officials began to come round.

At this time we were mainly concerned with problems of economics and as early as 1934, in an article on the Baigas in the *Modern Review*, the first that I ever wrote on the tribal problem, I pointed out 'the appalling poverty, destitution and ignorance of this heroic and fascinating people'. 'You are certain to be enchanted by them', I wrote, 'but you are equally certain to lie awake at night—and for many nights—haunted by the scenes of suffering that you have witnessed, and wondering what judgement must be passed on society that can calmly allow such things to continue from generation to generation.'

Poverty and disease were the fundamental problems, but the need for protection against every kind of exploitation was also constantly before us. I wanted to save what was beautiful, what was free; I have always opposed those who try to inject a sense of guilt into love, especially the love and happiness of simple people: I wanted to save them from anxiety—about their land, their forests, their next meal. I was absurdly misunderstood, but the poets and artists were always with me. W. G. Archer, for example, in his book of poems *The Plains of the Sun*, addressed one of his pieces (written during the war) to me and I put it in here, not just because I was flattered by it, but because it expresses exactly what I was trying to do.

Among your burning hills, the lonely jungle
Roars in the summer. The sterile land
Rests; and news comes up like clouds
While you are active in the needs of peace
Saving the gestures of the happy lovers
The poems vivid as the tiger
Faced with destruction from the septic plains
And with your love and art delay
The crawling agony and the death of the tribes.

Another very important aspect of what I was trying to do was to make the tribal people known. At that time in India, in spite

of the work of a few anthropological pioneers who were seldom read, the tribal people were regarded either as tiresome savages who caused trouble or as colourful and picturesque folk engaging themselves in sexual orgies, human sacrifice and head-hunting. As a result, although a few people tended to sentimentalize them, the general idea was to regard them as a different kind of human being, who might excite our condescending pity but could hardly arouse any kind of admiration.

I felt that if the tribes were to make any progress, it was essential that the rest of the country should treat them properly and regard them with affection and respect.

II

My views on the protection of the tribes caused a regular flutter, and for many years, indeed right up to the present time, I have been accused of wanting 'to keep them as they are', to hold up their development, to preserve them as museum specimens for the benefit of anthropologists. This is, and always has been, nonsense.

Some of the attacks upon me have been the result of deliberate misrepresentation, and generally my critics have not bothered to read what I have actually written. For in fact there was nothing very extraordinary about my policy. I thought the tribes had discovered secrets of living under hard conditions that the rest of us needed, and that their development should be a matter of careful timing. I wanted to ensure that they should only be 'civilized' (for it was obviously inevitable that they would be) when they could be civilized properly and I wanted to give them a breathing-space to build up pride in their own life and become economically self-sufficient so that they would not be completely overwhelmed when the outside world came upon them. I wanted them to make terms with their past and go forward in a natural evolution from it.

In the early years, however, I was greatly impressed by the urgent need of protection and in my book *The Baiga*, published in 1939, I advocated some sort of National Park in a 'wild and

largely inaccessible' part of the country, under the direct control of a Tribes Commissioner. But this did not mean that nothing was to be done.

Inside this area, the administration was to allow the tribesmen to live their lives with the 'utmost possible happiness and freedom'. Wide powers were to be given to the traditional tribal councils and the headmen of the villages would have their old authority re-established. Non-tribals settling in the area would be required to take out licences. No missionaries of any religion would be permitted to break up tribal life. Everything possible would be done for the progress of the people within the area, provided that the quality of tribal life was not impaired, tribal culture was not destroyed and tribal freedom was restored or maintained. Economic development would be given high priority and schools should be on the lines of what is now called Basic Education simplified and adapted to local needs. Fishing and hunting were to be freely permitted. The dictatorship of subordinate officials was to come to an end.

As I wrote a little later, we should, even for the wildest and most isolated groups, 'fight for the three freedoms—freedom from fear, freedom from want, freedom from interference. We may see that the aboriginals get a square deal economically. We may see that they are freed from cheats and impostors, from oppressive landlords and moneylenders, from corrupt and rapacious officials. We may see that they get medical aid . . . We may guard them against adventurers who would rob them of their songs, their dances, their festivals, their laughter.' This was not a policy for the isolation of the tribes: what I wanted was planned and controlled contact—which is a very different matter.

My suggestion in *The Baiga* was badly put and I should have realized the unfortunate connotations of the expression 'National Park'. But in 1939 what on earth was one to do? It was not a question of preserving Baiga culture—for the Baigas had very little culture: it was a question of keeping them alive, saving them from oppression and exploitation, giving them a simple form of development. In actual fact, the Government of India has now appointed a Tribes Commissioner and established Tribal Welfare Departments in several States, as well as

Scheduled and Tribal Areas, which in practice are not unlike what I suggested so long ago.

III

During the years preceding Independence there was not much scope for working out policies or philosophies, though there was a good deal of rather unrealistic academic discussion on the future of the tribes. The reason was that plans for the tribal people obviously had to keep pace with plans for the country as a whole. At this time *everybody* was neglected. The great majority of Indian villagers were still illiterate; they were still attached to antiquated and economically injurious social, religious and agricultural habits. They had little medical assistance, meagre educational facilities, bad communications; they were exploited and oppressed just as the tribal people were. The latter, however, were even more neglected than the rest and their lot was complicated by the anxiety of the British Government to prevent the independence movement from spreading among them. Congress workers were often not allowed to go into their hills, and when I myself first began work for the tribes I was kept under police surveillance for several years, perhaps naturally, for I certainly had a 'programme of discontent'. I was not allowed to open schools for the Baigas. Visits to forest villages were carefully supervised, if not prevented. There were hardly any roads, hospitals or dispensaries; there was little interest in the improvement of agriculture and there was no real protection against those who then preyed on and impoverished the tribal people.

This did not mean that nothing could be done but we had to be content to work at specific cases and within restricted limits. I used to draw the attention of the authorities to any outstanding abuses which I discovered, made suggestions for improvements in detail and studied such special subjects as the conditions of the tribal people in jail, the problem of shifting-cultivation and so on. At the same time, I and others continued to keep the tribal people in the public eye.

But then came Independence and with it a great awakening

throughout the country. The tribal people found their place on the map; they became news; great schemes of development were proposed. It quickly became clear that the timid and grudging programmes of British days were entirely unsuitable in free India. Although things still moved slowly, there came a new stress on the need to bring the tribes out of their long isolation and integrate them with the rest of India. Although before Independence I myself had accepted the position that some of the smaller and remotest tribes would have to remain out of the picture for the time being, this was never what might be called a 'philosophical' position: it was due to the necessities of the situation. Later, even for so remote an area as NEFA, I made it sufficiently plain in, for example, the second edition of *A Philosophy for NEFA*, that even there our policy was neither to isolate the tribes nor to freeze their culture and way of life as it was. During the Five-Year Plans large sums of money have been and will be spent on the tribal people throughout India, and I have been one of those who have advocated spending a great deal more than was originally proposed. You do not keep people 'as they are' or as a picturesque enclave by building roads into the very heart of their territory and by taking up very widespread schemes of development. I want change. Even in 1932 I wanted change. But what I want, and what those who think with me want, is change for the better and not degradation and decay.

There is endless talk nowadays about tribal development: if even a quarter of it were translated into action the position would be transformed. And in every conference, at every committee, in every speech, people feel it their duty to discuss over and over again the old controversy of Isolation, Assimilation or Integration, forgetting that it has been put completely out of date as a result of one major circumstance—that the whole of India, including tribal India, will be covered by Community Development Blocks in a year or two's time. This is a decision, this is going to happen, and it is therefore meaningless to discuss whether it is desirable to bring the tribes into the stream of modern civilization or whether it is good or bad to open up their country. Whether we like it or not, whether they like it or not, they are going to be 'civilized'; their country

will be opened up. There is, of course, still plenty to discuss, but such discussions must henceforth concern themselves with the details of programmes: the fundamental policy is settled. The conclusion of my committee appointed by the Home Ministry to study how these plans could be implemented, and my own view, was that, in the context of modern India, development in the tribal areas must be much more intensive than elsewhere to enable them to catch up with their neighbours, that special emphasis must be laid on economic programmes and on health, and that very large sums of money must be spent on roads to make the people accessible. 'The unity of the hills and plains', I wrote, 'is as essential to the general national interest as it is to that of the hill and forest people themselves. We may indeed look forward to an enriching process of mutual fertilization: we have much to give the tribes and they have much to give us.'

IV

With the coming of Independence and the birth of the Community Development movement I felt more and more that my own task was to emphasize attitudes and methods rather than to draw up programmes at which I could only be an amateur, and in the first five years after Independence I wrote and spoke mainly about the attitude that should be taken towards the tribal people and the psychological and social adjustments that had to be made both in ourselves and in them. I also pointed out the need for caution, the danger of overwhelming the people with too many schemes, of depressing them by our technological superiority and of creating an inferiority complex and anxiety about their land by importing too many outsiders into their villages.

It was also clear that, with the great schemes of development coming into being, a twofold policy was necessary. One was to ensure that the people were not culturally emasculated in a way that would rob them of their identity and character. India's is a rich and varied tapestry, as Mr Nehru has said, and the tribes had to be encouraged to maintain their own personality, their

own culture and their own language. But although in the earlier years I had thought in terms of *preserving* tribal culture, I came later to think in a less static way. Culture obviously must be a living, moving thing always subject to change, and Mr Nehru's formula of developing the tribal people along the lines of their own tradition and genius seemed to put what was needed in a nutshell.

At the same time I emphasized, writing in 1944, that 'it would be deplorable if yet another minority community which would claim special representation, weightage and a percentage of Government posts were to be created'. I wrote again five years later in the *Statesman* that 'the special care and protection given to the tribesmen must not cast any shadow on the unity of India. They must be educated to feel that they are full citizens of the Republic, with real rights and still more urgent duties.'

In most of tribal India the problems were comparatively simple. The people needed protection, development and social justice. But in a few places the problems were more complex. In the Saora hills and among the Murias, for example, there was still a strong, vigorous and very happy tribal life, and when I came to NEFA I found that here and in other parts of the frontier the tribes had retained their ancient culture and were developing their arts in a way that was rare elsewhere in India. Tribal life was still vigorous. It still meant something. It was not a question of reviving anything: it was more a problem of introducing change without being destructive of the best values of the old life.

Nari Rustomji had been thinking about these problems for a number of years and his ideas were already being put into practice on the frontier, though unfortunately I did not get copies of his notes until much later, and as a result did not do him justice when I wrote *A Philosophy for NEFA*.

As long ago as 1948, for example, we find him advocating very sound policies which would apply to the advance of civilization anywhere in the world. He condemns 'reckless' talk of 'uplifting and civilizing' the tribes. Officials or social workers must go to the people not as 'masters who dictate but as elder brothers who have suffered themselves and wish

through their experience to spare others the pains they have had to endure'. They must not try to impose a uniform machinery of administration everywhere and certainly not try to bring the traditional judicial system of the hills into line with that elsewhere. They should not dream of 'imposing a system, notorious for its abuses and its delays, over areas where a sense of justice is, one might almost say, inherent amongst the people, and where the law operates both speedily and effectively'.

And a later note, which Rustomji wrote in 1953, anticipated so exactly what I was to think and say later that I will quote it in full.

'Much of the beauty of living still survives in these remote and distant hills, where dance and song are a vital part of everyday living, where people speak and think freely, without fear or restraint. Our workers must ensure, therefore, that the good that is inherent in the institutions of the hill people is not tainted or substituted by practices that may be "modern" and "advanced", but are totally unsuited to their economy and way of thinking. The hillman has, essentially, a clean, direct and healthy outlook; he is free, happily, from the morbid complexes induced by the unnatural life of the city folk.

'The greatest disservice will be done, therefore, if in an excess of missionary zeal, our workers destroy the fresh creative urge that lives, strong and vital, within the denizens of the hills. For if we wish to serve, we must show that we have respect for the hillmen and their institutions, their language and their song; and, in showing such respect, we shall secure their confidence in the work that lies ahead.' For this reason, everyone should make it his first task to familiarize himself with the local language, 'take an interest and come to understand the customs and usages of the people and share fully in their life, not as a stranger from without, but as one of themselves.'

V

My first contribution to a philosophy of tribal change and development in NEFA was contained in a report (unfortunately marked SECRET) that I submitted to the Governor, who sent

it up to the Prime Minister, after a seven-weeks' tour in Tuensang. Almost everything that I later elaborated was contained, at least in germ, in this report, on which Mr Nehru wrote a long note giving his general support to what I had proposed.

After this I worked with my colleagues in the NEFA Secretariat for two or three very interesting years thinking out in great detail all sorts of problems and policies. Sometimes we met in Raj Bhavan to discuss tribal religion with the Governor. More often we met in my own house. The very first seminar we held was on the subject of tribal dress, and this was followed by a good many others. The Administration embodied our conclusions in a series of directives and later asked me to prepare a book which I called *A Philosophy for NEFA*. The first edition was short and plain but it earned an encouraging foreword from Mr Nehru and aroused sufficient interest for me to rewrite it entirely; I doubled its length, inserted plenty of illustrations and republished it in 1957. Mr Nehru gave a new foreword to this edition in which he laid down his famous Panch Shila (Five Principles) for the tribal people. The book was reprinted two years later, and has now been translated into Hindi and Assamese.

The fundamental basis of this philosophy goes back to the attitude of my Oxford days; even then I had a dislike of imposing things on people and this naturally developed into an aversion in the religious sphere to proselytizing and converting people or, in the social sphere, to forcing one type of civilization on another. So in this tribal policy, nothing was to be forced or imposed on the people, who were to be encouraged to develop (the key word is 'develop') along the path of their own traditions. They should come to terms with their past and grow from it by a natural evolution. This, of course, imposed considerable restraint on officials who, in all countries, are apt to feel superior to so-called primitive folk and to think that they have a god-given right to teach them better and do them good. But Mr Nehru said:

The problem of the tribal areas is to make the people feel that they have perfect freedom to live their own lives and to develop according to their wishes and genius. India to them

should signify not only a protecting force but a liberating one. Any conception that India is ruling them and that they are the ruled, or that customs and habits with which they are unfamiliar are going to be imposed upon them, will alienate them.

There is no room here to summarize the closely-packed argument of *A Philosophy for NEFA* which dealt with tribal problems under the heading of material needs, psychological adaptations, and social, religious and cultural problems. Perhaps the most fundamental aspect of this idealistic policy was actually a material one—that, as Mr Nehru said, ‘tribal rights in land and forest should be respected’. Another was that we should build up and train a team of the tribal people themselves to do the work of administration and development. Indigenous social and cultural institutions should be regarded as allies and not as rivals. Many tribes have very old youth clubs or dormitories which provide an excellent foundation for building up educational training institutions. The development of tribal councils, to which in NEFA very wide powers have been given, has proved of great importance in establishing the people in their own self-respect.

Then we were anxious to preserve the good taste of the tribes. Businessmen were not permitted to settle in NEFA; instead, the people themselves were encouraged to go in for trade, a policy which has proved very successful. The arts—the beautiful textiles, the music and the dance—were not to be corrupted but encouraged. There was no idea of keeping anything static and, in actual fact, there is continual creative development in all these fields. In architecture the idea was that even official buildings should be built so that they would grow out of the landscape and not appear as strangers in the rural scene, though unfortunately this has not proved very successful. Above all, the attitude of the official or social worker, whoever he might be, was to be based on a feeling of complete equality and friendship.

The ideas of this book were in the first place evolved in the NEFA context, but many of them can be, and have been, adapted also to other tribal areas. Some of these have very different problems—indebtedness, for example, or the impact

of industrialization—but the essential attitude is needed for them all.

My own policy is expressed, perhaps most clearly, in *A Philosophy for NEFA*. But it appears also in two other works. The first is in the Report of the Committee for Multipurpose Tribal Blocks, of which I was Chairman and for the writing of which I was largely responsible. The second is in the Report of the Scheduled Tribes Commission, generally known as the Dhebar Commission, of which I was a member. I was asked by Dhebar to prepare a shortened version of this rather formidable report (which ran to over 750 pages) and the little book that I did, *A New Deal for Tribal India*, should be read along with *A Philosophy for NEFA* by anyone sufficiently interested to know my wider ideas about what could be done for the tribal people throughout India.

In the Scheduled Tribes Commission Report Dhebar’s emphasis on social justice led us to stress protection side by side with development. In essence, the report of this Commission, which was exhaustively debated in Parliament and accepted by it, is a justification of the stand I have made for thirty years and shows that the attacks upon me for stressing the importance of the war against exploitation have hardly been justified.

VI

My ‘philosophy’ has had its critics. At a conference in Ranchi one of the Development Commissioners present got up and asked plaintively, ‘How can we develop the tribes along the lines of their own genius when they haven’t got any genius?’ It is true that many of the more sophisticated tribes have lost nearly all their culture and individuality, but there are others which have retained a great deal that is good and they all reveal to the sympathetic and intelligent observer certain things on which to build.

Another criticism is made in the interest of integration. It is said that, if we allow the tribal people to retain their own languages, dress or social institutions, we keep them separate

from the rest of India, and if we want to integrate them properly we should assimilate them as quickly as possible and smooth them out, as it were, so that they will be exactly like everybody else. The fallacy in this is that the people of India as a whole are marked by great variety and that there is no standard of culture, religion or language to which we can adapt the tribes. In practice, too, it is just those tribesmen who have smoothed themselves out and adopted a way of life that is indistinguishable from that of their neighbours who have been most clamorous for separation from the rest of the population. They have realized that they are losing their identity and are desperately anxious to preserve it. Many of the Naga rebels have taken to a Western way of life and dress in Western clothes. The hill people of Assam proper who want a separate State are just those who have been most completely assimilated. It may well be that in the long run all the tribes will lose their distinctiveness and sink into a drab uniformity, possibly dominated by the overpowering American civilization that is so rapidly spreading across the world. But it seems to me foolish to try to accelerate this process in the interest of integration, for this does not and will not work.

The Chinese invasion of NEFA set everyone thinking about the frontier but, instead of acclaiming our policy which had ensured a loyal and even enthusiastic local population to support the Defence Forces, a number of critics made it the subject of bitter and extravagant attack. For weeks it was impossible to open the newspapers without finding some denunciation of the 'philosophy' of NEFA or even of myself.

Not one in a hundred of the people who so readily denounced *A Philosophy for NEFA* appeared to have ever read it. The main reason why it was believed to have failed was that I was supposed to have advocated a policy of isolation, to have urged the separation of NEFA from the people of Assam, and naturally the old cry of keeping the tribes as museum specimens was raised again, though no one could point out how any of this had affected the course of the military operations. Generally my critics attributed to me views which were the exact opposite of what I had advocated. In actual fact, I had not supported any policy of isolation of the NEFA people but had devoted several

pages of this book to condemning it. The Inner Line, as it was called, by which the frontier is kept as a restricted area only to be entered by authorized persons, was established eighty-five years before my book was written and though I realize I am getting on, I am not as old as that. As for the Assamese people, for whom I have great affection and respect, I had included in my book the suggestion that every scheme of development, progress or welfare in NEFA should be submitted to the test whether it would help to integrate the tribal people with Assam and, of course, with India as a whole.

At the same time there were many supporters of our policy and Christoph von Fürer-Haimendorf, for example, wrote enthusiastically after a very recent visit to NEFA:

The 19th and early 20th century policy of *laissez faire* of provincial and state governments favoured exploiters and land-grabbers and the voices of the few devoted civil servants who spoke for the rights of the aboriginals remained largely unheard. There is only one region where a really bold and sympathetic approach to the problem of tribal development has saved the tribesmen from exploitation and the domination of outsiders. In the North-East Frontier Agency an administration has been instituted which develops the country solely for the benefit of its tribal inhabitants, and all those who have had an opportunity to visit this area in recent years must have been impressed by the skilful combination of a modernization of external living conditions with the retention of tribal traditions and values. Here the tribesmen have lost neither their dignity nor their *joie de vivre*, and they know that they themselves and their children are going to profit from the economic development of their country. The lessons learnt from the decline of many of the tribal communities in other parts of India have here been applied, and it is an encouraging thought that the *Philosophy for NEFA* has borne such splendid fruit.

VII

Let me then summarize my ideas for the tribal people as a whole, all twenty-five million of them (of whom the NEFA tribes are a small but significant part). To my mind, the five most important needs, in the context of many-sided schemes

of development of agriculture, communications, medical facilities, education, and so on common to the whole of India, are these:

1. That their land should be guaranteed to them and that any further alienation of it to outsiders should be stopped.
2. That their rights in forest should be respected and that an entirely new attitude should be taken towards them by the forest authorities throughout India.
3. That the problem of indebtedness should be solved without delay, partly by legislation and partly by a great intensification of the co-operative movement and the availability of easy credit from official sources.
4. That the problem of the industrialization of the tribal areas must be regarded much more seriously and that where the tribal people are dispossessed of their lands and settled elsewhere, intelligent and generous measures should be taken to compensate them.
5. That the long isolation of the tribes should come to an end, that they should be welcomed everywhere with warm affection and on equal terms, and that they should be given every opportunity of public service.

I stress these points because they have been badly neglected in the last ten years, because they are simple and obvious, and can be solved if there is a real will to solution in the Central and State Governments.

But there are five other points which are more complex.

1. We must help the tribes to come to terms with their own past so that their present and future will not be a denial of it but a natural evolution from it.
2. We must fight the danger of pauperization, the creation of a special class called 'tribal', who will want to be labelled 'backward' in order to get material benefits from Government. Unintelligent benevolence can be as great a danger as intelligent exploitation.
3. It is essential to avoid creating a sense of inferiority in the tribal people. This means that we must not impose our own ideas upon them. We must not create a sense of guilt by forcing on them laws and customs they do not understand and cannot observe. We must not make them anxious and afraid: we must not make them feel ashamed of their own natural ways.

4. We should lay much greater stress on the possibility of the tribal people helping us. At present all the emphasis is on our helping them. Let us teach them that their own culture, their own arts are precious things that we respect and need. When they feel they can make a contribution to their country, they will feel part of it: this is therefore an important aspect of their integration.

5. We must try to ensure that the people do not lose their freedom and their zest for living. I have put at the head of this chapter words that to me are the heart of the matter:

What more felicity can fall to creature
Than to enjoy delight with liberty?

Although my final conclusions were present in my thinking thirty years ago, the emphasis changed as I gained experience and as conditions changed in the country as a whole. At first my ideas were limited but intense, and I saw the problem as basically a spiritual one, investing every act of kindness with symbolic value. Gradually the harsh realities of the time caused me to emphasize the need for protection. It was only much later that I became concerned about the preservation and development of tribal culture. In north-eastern India protection was already assured and the important problem was how to give the tribes the good things of our life without destroying the good things of theirs. Internal political issues and international affairs generally have recently turned our thoughts to the importance of integration, although many of us had been thinking of this ever since Independence. And finally, I see a large, difficult, almost majestic, plan which includes on one side schemes for food, health, mobility and knowledge and, on the other, respect for and encouragement of tribal culture in the widest sense—religion, language, self-governing village institutions, social polity. To reconcile these two aims, to develop, yet not to destroy, is not easy but I believe it can be done.

Ultimate Ambition

To be happy at home is the ultimate result of all ambition.
—Samuel Johnson

I

FOR the past nine years we have lived in Shillong and, though I have been frequently away on tour, often for long periods, it has become a real home. Kumar, who has joined the Assam Rifles, is not now with us here but the smaller boys have just reached the right age to make a nice, obstreperous, untidy establishment.

The children practise, or rather claim to hold, different religions. Kumar became a Roman Catholic when he was seventeen and in a position to choose for himself. Wasant claims to be a Hindu and refuses 'to eat cows'. Nakul declares himself a pagan. Ashok is a Buddhist, can recite some of the sacred verses and makes flower-offerings at our shrine. Lila and I profess no particular religion, though I have a strong 'feeling' for Buddhism.

Lila is the centre of this home; key of the house; store of happiness; Heaven's best gift to all of us. In Congreve's words, she is the moon and I the man in the moon: I am still slightly lunatic about her. In fact, I love her even more today than when I first met her. What Arthur Koestler calls 'the normal, neutralizing effect of habituation' has had no effect on us.

Marriage and the family are central to Indian life. As Dr Radhakrishnan has said, 'There is little in Hindu thought to support the view that one has to attain spiritual freedom by means of a violent rupture with ordinary life. On the other hand, it lays down that we must pass through the normal life

conscientiously and with knowledge, work out its values and accept its enjoyments. Spiritual life is an integration of man's being, in its depth and breadth, in its capacity for deep meditation as well as reckless transport.'

On the other hand, some of India's spiritual leaders have taken a rather poor view of marriage. 'The love for our children and our wives is mere animal love,' says one of them. 'Man finds out that human love is all hollow.' 'Ordinary love is mere animal attraction.' 'I do not think', says another, 'that in our conception of marriage our lusts should enter.' And a third, widely renowned as a very great saint, declares that, 'The feeling which a woman feels for her husband is not love, for her feeling is based upon self. She loves her husband because he is her property.'

Yet surely, far from the need to prevent our lusts entering the marriage bed, passion is what modern marriage needs and its absence is the reason why so many marriages fail: art, technique, adventure, passion are the ingredients of happiness. Sex is good and lovely; all the extravagant phrases that the poets have ever used for it have not exhausted its beauty and delight: and the most important thing about it is not the pleasure it gives (though personally I enjoy it immensely) but the sense of identification with another person, the going out from oneself into someone else. 'Love', says Tagore, 'gives evidence to something which is outside us but which intensely exists and thus stimulates the sense of our own existence. It radiantly reveals the reality of its objects.'

I am a very lucky man—to have a young and exquisite wife who keeps me young. If Lila regards me as her property I am all for it: the mutual sense of selfless possession is one of the many precious treasures of a happy marriage.

She is my field, and in her furrows run my ways like rain, and the crops of her shadows are pools, are a wild sea—and she has mountains stranger than feathers, hard as fishes. There fall in her hollows shadows of orchard trees that follow the moon's circle like a tide—grassy nets that move on the dropped apples.

Someone who married a tribal girl said he had done so to

further the cause of national integration, and some politicians have seriously advocated a policy of intermarriage to bring the tribal people closer to the rest of India. I did not marry Lila on any theory, but simply because I loved her. Not all such marriages turn out well, as I know from my own first sad experience, but in this marriage we have both been very happy. This surprises some of our friends, for it would be hard to find two people more different in background, education and temperament. Yet I find in Lila the truest companionship, and while it would no doubt be amusing to have a wife with whom I could discuss the symbolism of Ezra Pound or Toynbee's theory of history, her loyalty, compassion and a rare capacity for understanding are much more precious. There is no sense of difference between us, and in practice we find we can share all the really important things. It is harder for Lila than for me, for I often have to go away on exciting missions and I am sometimes preoccupied with urgent problems. The 'office' appears sometimes as a rival, but she has adapted herself to it and takes a lively interest in everything that goes on. The love of man and wife is constantly re-created in their children, renewed by joy, strengthened by anxiety and sorrow. A 'love-marriage', where the impetus of love is strong, is the nearest thing to pure happiness on earth.

One difficulty we had at first was that many people found it almost impossible to believe we were legal. How could a lovely young creature who at that time, as Minnie Emmerson put it, looked at you like a startled deer from the woods, and who is so well described in the above lines by Alex Comfort, be actually married to a tumbledown, dilapidated old bear like me?

And other people ask how I could have married her. 'Sex,' they say, and dismiss the problem. But in reply I ask how it is that it is just the sort of women I like who like her. Amina Jayal, as she is now, daughter of the late Sir Akbar Hydari, humorous, gay and understanding, was the first of them. We saw a great deal of her delightful children, Pimmy and Laddu, while her youngest boy Akbar, who died so tragically when he was only three years old, is buried within sight of our house. When, after her divorce, she married Nalini Jayal, the Hindu ceremony was performed in our house and I acted as the bride's

father. Then among Lila's friends there was the kind, gentle Kanta Dhar; the graceful, elegant and witty Pankaj Kakati, whose recent death was a great shock to us, and her daughter Cuckoo; Pushpa Sharma, the wife of a distinguished officer in the Assam Rifles; 'Channi' Dougal, whose husband Bernard has been a friend of mine for years; Ellie Duara, highly literate but not a bit of a blue-stocking; Gita Krishnatry; many beautiful and talented Khasi and Lushai ladies who give distinction to Shillong; as well as others mentioned elsewhere in this book.

Lila has extraordinary powers of adaptation. She came to Shillong almost direct from a remote tribal village, yet within three months was proving an admirable hostess at parties, and even when our few V.I.P.s came to visit us she was thrown off balance less than I was.

But Lila remains, I am glad to say, a villager at heart. She is always wanting to be growing things and loves animals, and especially our young Alsatian, Rani. She works very hard in the house and has become an expert at knitting. She has, as they say, great 'character', can be very determined and, like most tribal folk, quickly sees through humbug and pretence. I myself tend to enthuse too quickly after meeting people but she is a better judge and much more cautious than I am. She is very kind; she is strict with people but at the least trouble her heart melts, and if she finds that anyone associated with us has not had a square meal she cannot eat herself until this is remedied.

II

Ashok was born in Shillong on a Sunday. From the early morning Lila began to get contractions, but she said nothing about it for, as she explained, 'No one labours on a Sunday in Shillong, so I can't labour either.'

I thought she wasn't very well, and made her lie down a good deal, but I was not actually expecting anything for another week. Fortunately, a nice girl called Gita Mehta (now Trivedi), who was a doctor, came to tea. It was Victor's birthday—he was

staying with us at the time—and we had a chocolate cake with **HAPPY BIRTHDAY VICTOR** on it. Phukan came, the man who looked after me so well in Manipur, an authority on P.G.W. Then this girl Gita arrived with Aporbo Chanda, once Director of Public Instruction for Bengal, now retired, a great character. And on top of all there was dear old Ganpat Rai, a Forest Officer, with a present of an outsize bunch of green bananas.

In the middle of this, Phukan talking about Lord Emsworth's pig, Aporbo holding forth on T. S. Eliot, Victor lecturing on the decline of the West, and dear old Ganpat describing how he had 'trampled two hundred serpents under foot' during his travels in NEFA, all talking at once, Gita came in and said that if we didn't get Lila to hospital immediately she'd be having the baby in the drawing-room. So we all got busy. Gita tried to telephone the hospital: the entire staff was at church, no one could do anything. At last a Sister turned up who said, couldn't the lady come tomorrow, they didn't like doing things on Sunday. So we decided to go ahead, packing, finding blankets, getting the ayah ready, calming the children, while all the time Aporbo boomed on indefatigably, now about Dylan Thomas.

Finally we got into the car, Lila, the ayah, Gita and me, with Victor driving. The car wouldn't go very well, and I said Victor was like a pilot carrying an atom bomb in an old Dakota. But we reached the hospital at last, found a Sister, got a very nice room, put Lila to bed, and then came back for dinner. At 10.0 we returned, we being Victor, Kumar and me, with blankets for an all-night vigil. We were put in a waiting-room, where Victor got hold of one of the hospital Bibles, a book he said he had often meant to read but had never got round to, and we waited. To our astonishment, at 11.10 p.m. dear Dr Hughes, looking exhausted and dishevelled—he at least never gets a Sunday off—peeped in and said, 'It's a boy.' After some time we were admitted to the Labour Room and there was Lila looking a bit worn on a stretcher which I helped push down to her ward, with the baby screaming away, looking rather charming. Lila was full of dope and sleepy, so we said good-night and came home at midnight. And that is how Ashok got his start.

III

Of all the delightful things in the world, children are the best and of them all tribal children are incomparable. It is they who have made life bearable for me at times when life was hard to bear, whether in the Mandla villages, where they were the best of company, or on many tours, or at home in Shillong. Their liveliness makes our gloom absurd, their beauty is reviving and since they are the very symbols of hope and expectation, they are a cure for anxiety and disappointment. Children have always been among the chief loves of my life.

In Patangarh, our house was always full of Gond and Pardhan children. I had a very large writing table which made an ideal place for hide-and-seek and other games. At any time of the day you could find children underneath it playing quietly or climbing about on top of it. This must, you will say, have been rather disturbing to a writer, but in the course of time it helped me to develop very strong powers of concentration. When I myself see somebody writing anything I approach on tiptoe and speak in a whisper. Nobody in a village or in my own family has ever done this for me. In time I became so practised in concentrating in the midst of turmoil that I could carry on my writing without any disturbance or irritation, except, of course, when I was pulled away from my desk and made to go on hands and knees with a couple of children on my back. At first I was a horse but later as I swelled a little they decided I was an elephant and Kumar once insisted that I was a hippopotamus.

Again on tour, whether in central India or the frontier, my camps have always been crowded with children, for I think they feel instinctively that I am on their side. Some of the most attractive young creatures I have seen anywhere were the Bondo boys, of whom I could say with Dr Johnson: 'I love the young dogs of this age.' Other children became so intimate and at-home that they would pull my cigar out of my mouth, take a puff or two themselves, sometimes handing it round from friend to friend, and then return it between my lips. In some villages, particularly the Saora villages where children used to drop in at meal-times, I sometimes had a regular battle to get

any food at all, with a group of boys and girls stretching out eager hands for what there was on my plate and even helping themselves.

IN NEFA one of the things that used to depress me was the habit of the village elders driving away children from my camp because they thought that the sahib would be annoyed. It generally took a little explanation before they could believe that he really enjoyed the company of children. The tribal people themselves, however, have a very great love for their children and some of my most heartbreaking moments have been at children's funerals or sitting helplessly by when a child was dying.

To turn from this great family to the more immediate one of our own children. Kumar, the eldest, was very charming as a small boy and a good companion when he got older—he did two long tours on foot with me, a couple of hundred miles each time, in northern Siang, and also went to Tirap. Wasant also, at eight and nine years, went out twice with me, and Nakul and Ashok joined him when we all went to Lungleh, an exciting drive through the remote and lovely Lushai hills.

It is always fun taking the children by air. One day great clouds rolled up and I was looking at them with apprehension when Wasant said, 'Daddy, the clouds look like angels. There's nothing to be afraid of.' When we went into them and it got very bumpy, the orange lights flashing on, he said excitedly, 'Do you think we can have a crash?' And afterwards, when I asked Nakul if he had been afraid, he said, 'Why should I have been? I had my seat-belt on.'

The children have developed their own vocabulary of essentially amiable denunciation. Ashok is the most original. 'You nonsense,' he says, an admirable adaptation. 'Get out, you fat English,' he attacks me if I refuse to 'pass him' four annas. When he was about three years old, my sister Eldyth came to stay with us. A few days after her arrival Ashok got annoyed with her about something, and a stream of four-letter Hindi words poured from his baby lips.

'What is the sweet little darling saying?' asked Eldyth.

I explained hastily that he was telling her how much he liked her and how glad he was that she was here.

When Eldyth went away, Nakul—then about four—squeezed her arm and said, 'Very good meat.'

My Patel Memorial lectures on 'A Philosophy of Love' were broadcast: Ashok heard bits of them, and made his own contribution. 'When I grow up,' he said, 'I'm not going to marry a pretty girl, for then hundreds of mens would run after her to do loving and would say, "Come, come to me, my girl-friend".'

Of the younger boys, Wasant is sensitive and affectionate; Nakul is sensible, hard-working, very popular at school and a wonderful patient when he is ill; Ashok is full of ideas and excels as a businessman.

Wasant is the one to whom things happen. One evening when he was very small an almirah, full of books, toppled over on top of him, but fortunately was caught on a stool and although he was badly frightened by the cascade of books he was not injured. One year in Delhi I took Lila and the children to watch the Republic Day parade. There were a million people there and when it was over and we were going out, Wasant, then eight years old, got lost in the crowd. We had been hearing frightening stories about child-kidnappers and Ashok described how he had seen Wasant walking away with an old beggar woman, which greatly added to our anxiety. It was an agonizing experience, for we felt helpless, almost paralysed as we thought of this tiny child from quiet Shillong in the vast crowds that thronged the great city. There were police camps for missing children and we went to them, finding in each twenty or thirty small boys and girls crying for their mothers. But though we looked eagerly into their faces, there was no sign of Wasant. Khemlal Rathee brought his car and sent for his astrologer who worked it out that Wasant would return after about five hours, though I must confess this did not greatly console me. We drove round and round Delhi, our apprehension increasing each hour that passed. I got hold of one of our younger officers, Tapan Kumar Barua, then in Delhi, who had accompanied me on tour when Wasant was with me, and he went out on an independent search. By 5.30 poor Lila was almost hysterical and I do not think I have ever felt quite so despairing, for by then most of us and even the Rathees were afraid that the child had been kidnapped.

And then at just about the time that the astrologer had prophesied, a taxi drew up and out got Tapan Kumar with a beaming Wasant. For the first time in my life I burst into tears, the relief was so great. Wasant was full of his adventures. He had wandered through the crowds, not specially frightened, for he was sure we would find him, until he was discovered by a kindly policeman who had given him biscuits and shown him his revolver. But it was a long time before Lila fully recovered from the strain of those few hours.

Whenever I am ill, Wasant gets very worried about me, looks after me and constantly inquires how I am. Like many Indian children, he confuses 'yesterday' and 'tomorrow', since they both translate the same Hindi word, and every day for months he used to say, 'Are you better than you were tomorrow, Daddy?', which gave me a pleasant science-fiction sensation as if I had got out of the time-space continuum. One day I had a slight relapse and I shall never forget how Wasant, observing this, began to scream in panic, tears pouring down his face. The love that moment of anxiety revealed was one of the precious things in my life.

Ashok is the businessman of the family. When he was only four years old he exclaimed, 'Daddy, I do love money.' He often refuses to go to the cinema when the other boys do and demands compensation instead. If he has to have an injection, he charges a suitable fee. He makes little portable shops and sells things to everyone. He collects stamps, which has great commercial possibilities. He has a special interest in medals, or at least in their monetary value, as all the family has. I have been lucky in getting a number of them from academic societies in India and England. The attitude of Ashok to them is simple. If they are bronze, like my Rivers or Wellcome medals, he is not interested: they won't fetch anything. But anything in gold is another matter. I have three—the Roy and Annandale from the Asiatic Society in Calcutta and a nice heavy one, the Campbell, from its opposite number in Bombay. There is a rush to get the letter-weight machine from the office, and Ashok and the others weigh them and make elaborate calculations to discover how much they are worth at present prices.

I am not ferocious enough to be a good father. My attitude to children is Thomas More's in his epistle *To his sweetest children*:

I have given you, forsooth, kisses in plenty and but few stripes.
If ever I have flogged you 'twas but with a peacock's tail.

IV

Part of the family about whom I must say a word is my personal staff, in whom I have been very fortunate. My stenographer, Someswar Lahiri, who has been with me now for eight years, is loyal and efficient; my two Khasi typists, Higher Land Syiemlich (now promoted) and Lockhart Jyrwa, are as good as anyone could desire. My field-assistant, Sundarlal Narmada, has been with me now for over thirty years, my two chaprasis—Haricharan and Bhajan—for about twenty-five. Sundarlal has gone with me on nearly all my tours and is an able and effective organizer. My usual practice on tour is to send Sundarlal and Bhajan ahead—they walk twice as fast as I do—to prepare camp, and Haricharan goes with me to help me over bridges and sometimes to pull me up very steep ascents. The result is that when I reach camp, I find a little shed erected, my things laid out in dormitory or house, and a hot meal nearly always ready. How they manage to cook, and cook well, under the most difficult conditions has always been a mystery to me.

Both Haricharan and Bhajan are tribal Pardhans but they sometimes find it a little difficult to put up with their more primitive brethren and their habit of crowding the little kitchens on tour, fingering and examining everything with absorbed interest. There was once a heated dispute when Bhajan opened a tin of ham and some Wanchos insisted that it was human flesh. Once, when a group of 'naked' Bondos was rude to him, Haricharan exclaimed, 'May tigers munch their bare bottoms *kirach karach!*'

Sundarlal, who is not tribal, has a tender and sympathetic attitude: his trouble has been with what Bertrand Russell has called 'the insolent aristocracy of jacks-in-office' and one day, when he was in Patangarh and I in Calcutta, he sent me a

telegram: HAVE KICKED POLICEMAN COME AT ONCE. Victor and I hastened to the rescue, and it was just as well for, though the kick was eminently justified and didn't really hurt, one could hardly expect the police to appreciate it.

V

I brought to Shillong a lot of pictures and some big boxes of trophies with the idea at first simply of building around me a comforting tribal atmosphere. I brought, for example, the very fine Santal wood-carvings and Jadupatua scrolls which I had collected in Bihar, Gond and Muria masks and my early Naga specimens of a kind which were already becoming very hard to get. The house was large; I had display-cases made and, as I travelled about NEFA, I gradually added to the original collection until it became a rather overcrowded but interesting museum which belongs to our little society TWARU and will in the end go to the nation. I could write an entire chapter about my adventures as a collector—every specimen has its story—but I have no room to do so here.

The Buddhist images, masks and pictures—some of which I brought down from the extreme north—made a particularly charming room, and one result has been to attract a number of very interesting people to our house. One of the earliest of these was Mr Nehru.

Hours before the Prime Minister was due to arrive, the police and CID appeared. They were very doubtful whether he should be allowed to come at all since our house is, thank goodness, in a lonely spot and surrounded by trees and bushes, any of which, they pointed out, could give good shelter to an assassin. In the end no fewer than thirty-five plain-clothes policemen were assembled in and around the house. They were there in the kitchen, in the bedrooms, and Lila had the pleasure of entertaining them all with tea and sweets.

Before Mr Nehru arrived, the chief topic of discussion was what kind of refreshment we should offer him. I personally, having heard his views on Prohibition for the tribes, was in favour of some sort of stimulant. Others thought this was going

too far, so we compromised with a bottle of good sherry which we placed on a tray with some suitable (borrowed) glasses, in the bath-room adjoining one of the museum rooms. At the same time we arranged to have a tray with coffee and cups more obviously on a table in the room itself.

Mr Nehru, accompanied by the Governor, Mr Jairamdas Daulatram, went all round and looked at everything with great interest and made a number of remarks which I still treasure. I myself was in a state of nerves, not because of our illustrious visitor who, as always, was delightful, but because there were so many gate-crashers outside the building trying to get in and I feared that they might cause a disturbance. When the suitable moment, therefore, came I was hardly in a position to offer a Prime Minister anything, let alone something alcoholic, and in my agitation I said, 'Sir, will you have a cup of sherry?' Quick as lightning the P.M. replied, 'No, I think I will make do with a glass of coffee.'

Another very distinguished visitor was the Home Minister of the time, Pandit G. B. Pant, who showed great interest in my collections and said something which I have always treasured and will risk the charge of vanity by repeating. He said: 'It has been the great work of Dr Elwin to raise the status of the tribal people in public opinion all over India. He has shown us that they are not just backward people but have an art and a culture of their own, and so has influenced the policy of the whole country.' Pandit Pant in fact was always very good to me and I saw something of him towards the end of his life and developed a deep affection for him. I shall always be grateful that I had the opportunity of knowing him and working for him.

There also came the Chief Minister of Assam, Mr B. P. Chaliha, a gentle kind man with an exceptional affection for the tribal people. On one occasion before he became Chief Minister, he visited the Naga Hills and went, without any kind of protection and at night, to contact some of the rebels in the heart of the forest. On his return he wrote one of the most understanding reports on the Naga problem that I have ever read. I once asked him what magic he had used towards the solution of the many human and political tribal problems of

his State, and he replied, 'A little understanding, a genuine respect, a lot of affection. That is the real magic that works wonders in human hearts.'

VI

A few years ago Arthur Koestler stayed with us in Shillong for a week. He was on a visit to India and, since he is an incurably controversial person, he had been pursued by journalists and sniped at by Communists wherever he went. He wanted a little peace and I think we gave him that, while unexpectedly he brought such an atmosphere of serenity and strength into our house that, when he went away, Lila—who is not easily impressed—said that it was as if some great sadhu had been with us. Arthur has said of Vinoba Bhave that he has 'that curious gift of radiating peace which is physically felt like a laying on of hands: of making people feel enriched by his mere presence' and, though Arthur is a very different kind of man, his effect on me was something of the same kind.

Arthur came to India and Japan in the mood of a pilgrim, to discover whether the East had any answer to the perplexities and deadlocked problems of Europe. He wanted to look at the predicament of the West from a new perspective, a 'different spiritual latitude'. His 'reluctant' conclusion was characteristically forthright: 'neither Yoga, Zen, nor any other Asian form of mysticism has any significant advice to offer.' *The Lotus and the Robot*, which, to my great pleasure, he dedicated to me, describes his Indian tour and, perhaps naturally, annoyed a number of people, especially orthodox Hindus, in India, who do not take criticism very well. There were meetings and protests, some of which, I suspect, may have been instigated by Communists disguised in saffron robes.

It is true that Arthur says some hard things about India and her religion, but some of them badly needed saying and in most of them he had actually been anticipated by modern-minded Indians. Three hundred years ago, of course, had Arthur written about Christianity as he did about Hinduism,

he would have been burnt alive. But we have moved forward a little since that time. Christianity has endured and survived every sort of attack upon it: it has even grown and improved as a result. A book which makes a rather similar psychological analysis is Leuba's *The Psychology of Religious Mysticism*, which is far more damaging to Christian mysticism than Arthur's comments to yoga, because it is much more thorough. A work like Frazer's *Folk-Lore in the Old Testament* undermines the unique character of the Bible in a far more devastating way than anything Arthur did for Hinduism. Indeed, the obscurantist attitude of some people in this matter reminds me of the story of the two old ladies of the last century who were discussing the shocking theories of Charles Darwin. 'Descended from apes, my dear?' said one of them. 'Let us hope it is not true. But if it is true, let us pray it does not become too widely known.'

I do not, of course, agree with everything in *The Lotus and the Robot* and I wrote to Arthur, soon after I received my copy, to suggest that his account of Gandhi's experiments in brahmacharya gave a wrong picture. Arthur depended far too much on a rather bad book, *My Days with Gandhi*. He does not seem to have seen the remarkable study of the same subject by Pyarelal in his *Gandhi: The Last Phase*, which brings out Gandhi's conception of himself as the Mother and gives a different and much more intelligible interpretation of the famous experiments. I had the book on my shelves when Arthur was staying with us and I am ashamed that I did not bring it to his attention, but the matter was not one that we discussed.

Nor do I altogether agree with Arthur's disappointed estimate of Hinduism. He drew, I think, a little too much from the professionals, though it is hard to see what else he could have done. If a Hindu were to go to England to study Christianity he too would have to meet the experts. I myself have learnt a great deal from Hindu and Buddhist mysticism, though I would not like to affirm that I could not have found much the same message in the mystics of the West.

What has so impressed me has been the effect of these oriental religions on ordinary and simple people, from whom I have

learnt much more than from the books. I think, for example, of the man I call the Good Hansenian. He was a Bhil who had adopted the Hindu religion. He made a great journey on foot—what is called in India a *pradakshina*—which involved walking right up the length of the sacred Narbada river from its mouth in western India to its source near our house at Patangarh by one bank, and then all the way back by the other. But he was a leper, and by the time he had reached Amarkantak and was on his way home, his disease had advanced to a stage where he could go no further and he took refuge with us. In this deformed and terribly afflicted tribal sadhu I saw the Hindu religion at its best. For all his sufferings he was unfailingly cheerful and patient. I do not remember his ever complaining about anything. So far as he could, he helped his fellow-patients in little ways. When they were bad-tempered he brought peace and when they were unhappy he cheered them up. He was possessed by heroic charity. He died, as he had lived, in confidence and serenity.

As I say, I do not agree with everything in Arthur Koestler's book, and I am quite sure he would not want me to, but a work of this kind, which makes people think, which stimulates and challenges them, is surely to be welcomed rather than denounced. At the height of the Pasternak controversy, Mr Nehru declared that 'a noted writer, even if he expresses an opinion opposed to the dominating opinion, according to us should be respected and it should be given free play'.

Among anthropologists my closest friends have been J. H. Hutton who has been a sort of god-father for many years; that most liberal of scholar-missionaries, Edwin Smith, who visited us at Sanhrwachhapar; and above all Christoph and Betty von Fürer-Haimendorf. Christoph is a man of exceptional courage and perseverance, an intrepid explorer, with an astonishing flair for the unusual and significant: I followed in his footsteps to the Bondo-Gadaba country, the Konyak villages and the north of NEFA. He possesses a charity and generosity all too rare among anthropologists; high-spirited Betty has a tremendous zest for life: both are very lovable people.

Recent visitors in Shillong were Otto and Juliana Kadlecovics, and their entrancing little daughter Magdalena. Otto is from

Austria, an artist and photographer, and Juliana is English. They were travelling round the world in a Land-Rover, an original and exciting family. While he was with us Otto painted the (for me) thought-provoking portrait which is reproduced on the jacket of this book.

VII

Although in the earlier years in central India I had a long struggle to keep going, for I often fell ill, since coming to Shillong I have generally enjoyed excellent health and so have Lila and the children. But when we do fall ill we make the most of it. I have given a lurid description of a three months' stay in a Bombay hospital in my *Leaves from the Jungle*.

When I was in East Africa I began to develop mysterious pains. I went to a specialist in Nairobi who subjected me to the usual indignities. When he had completed the drill he produced a report which I secretly considered highly offensive. Among other things, this is what it said:

The stomach is of high transverse type. Its mucosal pattern is coarse, particularly in the distal third where it appears almost polypoid.

At that time I was getting a little stout and, being rather sensitive about my corporation, to have it called polypoid was the last straw and I went on a diet immediately and this was a great strain. Alexander Woolcott once said that all the things he really liked were immoral, illegal or fattening.

The cholecystogram revealed that I had no fewer than two gall-bladders and my specialist wanted to operate at once and urged me to go into the very fine hospital in Nairobi and have it done. I discovered, however, that this hospital, at least at that time, would not admit coloured patients and I probably saved my life (for I heard afterwards that it would have been a very tricky operation) by refusing to go into a place to which Africans and Indians would not be admitted. When I returned to Bombay I had to go through an entire fortnight of further examination but, apart from a few pills and a quite ferocious

diet-chart, the doctors there decided that it would be better not to operate. In the past ten years, these two gall-bladders, which my specialist told me were at that time only the twenty-eighth recorded in medical history—there was great excitement in a Bombay hospital when my X-ray picture was developed—have given me little trouble. By a policy of masterly inaction, I hope I have got them in hand.

In June 1961 I had an exciting attack of coronary insufficiency, and was rushed to the Military Hospital in Shillong, where there is a staff of brilliant Army doctors and sisters. I was allowed no visitors for ten days, which made me feel very important, but Lila of course came and Nari Rustomji, who is an angel when one is ill, slipped in twice a day and brought me most of Somerset Maugham's stories which, curiously enough, I had never read.

I had begun six months previously with high blood-pressure and the *rauwolfia serpentina*, one of India's oldest drugs, given for this made me feel as if I was perpetually detumescent after an unsatisfactory performance. But the tranquilizers I got later were delicious.

They had little bits of paper wrapped round them saying what they did for you. One, I was told, saved me from mental and emotional disturbance, another cured my dysmenorrhoea, morning sickness and bed-wetting: a third enabled me to have a baby in comfort. I was soon free of anxiety and nephrogenic hypertension. I also got some injections that the doctor said would make me a new man. The phials were filled with nor-androstolene phenylpropionate dissolved in oil, which sounded as if it would make a new man of anything, but I was mortified to read a note saying that it was indicated for the 'treatment of men when increased libido was undesirable'.

The doctor told me that I should ration myself to 'one peg of gin a day', for gin is a coronary dilatant and does one good. He forgot, however, to mention whether it should be big or small, and I didn't pursue the matter. In fact, I have drunk very little for a long time now. Alcohol I would not miss, tobacco is a much sterner tyrant. The trouble is that I *believe* in tobacco: it has made me a better man. I like the old story about Samuel Butler.

He was once invited to Peterborough by Bishop Mandell Creighton, and was a little doubtful whether to go or not. As usual he consulted his clerk Alfred, who said,

'Let me have a look at his letter, sir.'

Butler gave him the letter, and Alfred said, 'I see, sir, there is a crumb of tobacco in it; I think you may go.'

Butler, inspired by this favourable omen, and borrowing a prayer-book to pack in his portmanteau, went to stay with the bishop and enjoyed himself very much.

At meetings of the Tribal Commission, Jaipal Singh and I used to sit together at the end of the table blowing cigar smoke over the other nine members who were all non-smokers and some of them protested. But our chairman, Dhebar, was always very kind about it and once endeared himself to me by taking a bottle of ink out of its cardboard box which he passed to me to use as an ash-tray.

But to be serious for a moment. Pain, which Schweitzer calls 'a more terrible lord of mankind than even Death himself', yet does not deny some blessing to a family: it holds it together in strong bonds of compassionate affection. One year Lila was tormented by a stone, another year she had an acute appendicitis, and it was when she was in hospital that we all realized how much we loved her. It was when I myself was ill that I in turn realized how Lila and the boys felt about me. It is in sickness that we see how love, and all the beautiful things that come from it, can not only make suffering bearable and bring out of distress the possibility of spiritual growth, but can itself act as a healing force.

I have experienced the healing power of music. Long ago when I was very ill in a Bombay hospital, I was kept alive, stimulated to go on living in a world which had such beauty, by having Beethoven's Fifth symphony (the only one I had) played over and over again by my bedside. And recently when I was suffering agonies of toothache, another of Beethoven's symphonies, the Pastoral, drew the pain out of me. I could actually feel it being drawn away in the joy of the music.

I have often been treated by tribal medicine-men, whose methods are strange but do express their affection and concern. I have always found them singularly comforting. And to the

many doctors who have looked after me, too many to mention by name, I must express my gratitude for their professional competence and human affection.

I recently had a second bout of trouble with the one organ I had always thought was tough and durable: I did not have the distinction of a thrombosis, but was on a lower level altogether, only some myocardiac insufficiency. But the doctors take even this seriously: 'your life,' they said, 'must now be regular, moderate, cautious'—what depressing adjectives these are! In fact, of all the things that have happened to me, more even than leaving the Church or changing my nationality, this has demanded the greatest mental adjustment.

'The tragedy of age', said Oscar Wilde, 'is not that we are old, but that we are young.' To some extent too, the tragedy of illness is not that we are sick, but that we are well. They tell me I shall be perfectly all right and have still plenty of work in me: in fact, almost as soon as I got out of hospital and long before I was supposed to be doing anything more than lying back in bed and enjoying my tranquillizers, I was very fully engaged in editing a popular version of the Tribal Commission Report, *A New Deal for Tribal India*. But I doubt if I shall be able to clamber about the high mountains very much or lose myself, as I used to, in the wilds. There could be no greater blow than this, for my loves are the remote, the lonely, the unknown.

Yet I and thousands of others have to accept this, live with it, find happiness and usefulness in spite of it, perhaps even through it. The real life of man, which no one can take from him, is within, and neither poverty nor disappointment nor change of circumstances can harm him if he has learnt to guard his spirit well.

The Elusive Treasure

To abandon the struggle for private happiness, to expel all eagerness of temporary desire, to burn with passion for eternal things—this is emancipation, and this is the free man's worship.
—Bertrand Russell

I

IT would be presumptuous for me to give a summing-up of my ideas on life, God and eternity at what I will call the early age of sixty, though it might be said that I should have made up my mind about these things by now. But it is just at this stage of life that a man really begins to learn, and I am learning so fast now that what I have to say in this final chapter can only be tentative.

Looking back across my life and over what I have written in this book I see that, although I am not really a clubbable man, it has always been people that have mattered. I can tell the story of my life most easily in terms of my friends.

All my life I have been in love with something, a cause, a tribe, a person. I fall in love in turn with every tribe I study. On the whole, I find the world a very lovable place and human beings, once you get to know them, very lovable creatures.

I have also loved a few people in a more intimate fashion. I have written a lot, and in great detail, about sex and some of my friends have supposed that I must have drawn my knowledge of the Murias' erotic life, for example, from personal experience. Indeed, a well-known anthropologist once said that the only way to break down the barriers between the investigator and his tribe was to speak the latter's language, eat his food and sleep with his women. In my own experience eating

tribal food may be helpful in creating confidence on a brief visit, but otherwise does nothing but ruin your digestion. And it is a fallacy to suppose that by sleeping with a tribal girl you will find a way to the discovery of tribal secrets. For sleeping with girls is not an anthropological experience and to do so does not even give an insight into traditional sex techniques.

The professional research man, therefore, must be strict with himself on his expeditions. Among the Marias (to whom I would give the first prize), the Konyaks, Kuttia Konds, Mishmis and the Cabrais of Africa, there were girls of devastating beauty and fascination. They lit up their whole tribe for me—but I admired them at a distance.

People often say, even Bernard Shaw has said it, that dress is more exciting than nudity. Not for me. The complete Cabrai nudity thrilled me with its beauty and freedom and even the semi-nudity of Marias, Konds and Saoras (as they lived in the old days) seemed to me aesthetically and morally good. A woman's breasts are sometimes regarded as symbols of compassion rather than of sex, and to see them bravely and innocently exposed has always delighted me, not because they excite me sensuously (I hope I am not humbugging myself over this) but because they speak of freedom, health and naturalness.

I suppose a man never forgets his first intimate relationship with a girl; in my case, I am glad to say, it was no purchased furtive pleasure, but the culmination of a long period of romantic love and was not unrequited. The forest setting was as lovely as my 'girl of furious gold' herself.

I have had one overwhelming experience of love which could not be fulfilled, that malady which the medieval physicians so rightly classed with madness, frenzy and hydrophobia. The torment and wonder of this, disastrous and impossible as it was, gave a quality to living that I have never known before or since; it heightened all my sensibilities; and made many things real that I have only known in books. Our lives 'so truly parallel', though infinite, could never meet.

Therefore the love which us doth bind,
But Fate so enviously debars,
Is the conjunction of the mind,
And opposition of the stars.

But love of a less dramatic kind, love tender, precious, reciprocated, I have sometimes known, and I count these moments as among the finest in my life. I am not in the least ashamed. I am proud that I was capable of them.

Today, and for many years past, my old loves have been concentrated on my beloved wife, in whom I have found the essence of them all. I am a better lover now for those experiences.

And, moving forward and outward (I will not say upward) from the passionate, enthralling love of treasured individuals, I have found a wider love for people generally. I am very serious about love—sexual love, spiritual love, love as a substitute for quarrelling and war. It is, as I shall urge at the end of this chapter, the final solution of our problems.

II

To change one's nationality is, unfortunately, still a very serious matter. In my own case, however, the formal legal act was only the culmination of a very long process which had begun twenty-five years before, the fruit of an intense desire for identification. Denis de Rougement says: 'The love of Tristan and Iseult was the anguish of being *two*: and its culmination was a headlong fall into the limitless bosom of light, there where individual shapes, faces and destinies all vanish: "Iseult is no more, Tristan no more, and no name can any longer part us".' I have always felt this need of identification—with a loved person, with a loved tribe, with a loved country. I cannot bear to be a mere spectator: I want to be involved. So becoming an Indian citizen was a spiritual experience, involving every part of me, as a love-marriage would.

I did not give up my British nationality in a fit of pique. I have always been very fond of Britain and proud of her. It is true that in the thirties I was greatly concerned about British imperialism and, more specifically, about the way the British Government handled things in India. The treatment of Gandhi's followers and of Gandhi himself is an old story now and I would be the last to revive it. Perhaps one of the most

remarkable things about modern India is the way she has forgotten and forgiven what happened at that time. But then it was very real, and the superior attitude of both State and Church officials, even though there were notable exceptions, made it more and more difficult for me to feel at ease with my fellow-countrymen. But my becoming an Indian was not a negative thing, a reaction against something. I fell in love with India when I was with Gandhi and he accepted me. Later I had an even stronger intense and specialized attachment to India's tribal people.

For very many years past I have never thought of myself as an ex-Englishman. It just does not occur to me unless somebody mentions it and then it is always rather a shock. I do not know whether my Indian friends regard me as part of the picture but I myself feel so much part of the Indian scene, and I have felt like this for so many years, that I am not self-conscious about it. I am here and everything is entirely natural. Ours is an Indian home, and my children look on themselves as Indian and are proud of their country. One day during the Chinese invasion, young Wasant came to me and said very seriously, 'Daddy, I want to talk to you about our nation'. A Delhi paper described me the other day as 'a British-born Indian', which puts it very well.

My former countrymen, although at first they regarded me as someone not very nice to know, have accepted me since Independence as a sort of phenomenon who might be regretted but could not be helped. Occasionally I meet people whom I distress. One day in Calcutta there was a South African who said pleadingly, 'However extraordinary your opinions may be, there is one thing that can never be taken from you. Your blood is white.' And an American from Texas, who was rather sensitive about the race problem and said he could never bring himself to touch a Negro, said much the same thing that, however I might try, I still remained an Oxford man. Well, after all, there are a number of distinguished born-Indians who are even more 'Oxford' than I am.

I want then to make this clear, that my becoming an Indian citizen did not involve any real break with Europe. I realize that the roots of my culture are there. I am not one of those

exceptional Europeans who have been able to assimilate Hindu or Buddhist culture into the very texture of their thinking as well as into their way of life. I lived for many years in the forest in a rather odd way, not because it was 'Indian' but because I liked it. If I eat Indian food today I am not making a gesture but I have it simply because I enjoy rice and curry and Indian sweets. I have learnt much from my studies in Indian philosophy, art and literature, which have opened out an entire new world to me, but down at the bottom there is still the foundation of European culture. I do not say that this is good or bad but simply that it is a fact.

India shook me out of convention and acceptance. She destroyed my religion and gave me a working faith.

She has given me wonderful friends—scholars, administrators, journalists, poets, artists, and plenty of nice ordinary human beings. The Indians are a warm-hearted people who respond to affection; a people with whom you quickly get on terms; a kind, generous, thoughtful people. Long ago Voltaire, writing with rather similar enthusiasm about England, added: 'not but there are some fools in England'. And in India too, I am afraid.

All the same I am incurably optimistic about India. Her angry young men and disillusioned old men are full of criticism and resentment. It is true that there is some corruption and a good deal of inefficiency; there is hypocrisy, too much of it. But how much there is on the credit side! It is a thrilling experience to be part of a nation that is trying, against enormous odds, to reshape itself.

One day on a visit to Nagaland I went to Ungma, a very large Ao Naga village near Mokokchung. When I arrived I saw, to my horror, a notice outside the great church there that there would be a service that afternoon and that Dr Elwin would preach the sermon. I had had no warning and I couldn't imagine what to say. So instead of talking to the congregation of at least four thousand people about conventional religion (which I would have been in any case unfitted to do) I told them why I had become an Indian citizen. Some of the Naga leaders had told their people that they were not Indians and, though most of them had by then accepted the idea that they were, I

thought it would interest them to know how someone coming originally from another strong and independent country could regard it as the proudest day in his life when he became an Indian citizen and how happy he was to belong to India and to be accepted by her people.

One of the reasons I gave was that in India, gentle, tolerant India, it is possible (despite the Puritans) to live your own life more freely and with less interference than almost anywhere in the world. There are irritations, as there must always be if one wishes to live in society, but these are not so heavy as to depress one unduly. Dr Radhakrishnan said recently that it was much more important 'to safeguard the unfettered freedom of the individual to pursue truth and seek beauty' than to pass laws.

Secondly, in India there is real freedom of religion. At one time there had been a lot of rebel propaganda among the Nagas that the Christians among them would not be permitted to practise their faith and that some form of Hinduism would be imposed on them. I reminded the congregation that India's Constitution guaranteed liberty not only to believe and practise, but also to propagate, one's religion. A man is, of course, equally free to have no religion at all.

And thirdly, I told the Nagas that I do not think there is any country where there is more warmth and affection. I anticipated, in simpler language, what I later elaborated in my Patel lectures:

India, throughout its history which has been assailed so often by forces inimical to love, has in its metaphysics, its social customs and the temperament of its people always been dominated by love. It has believed that all life is sacred and among its ideals are those of Ahimsa which will cause no injury, Karuna which has compassion on all beings, and Maitri which gives itself in practical love and charity. The love deep in its heart has made men tolerant and liberal towards the beliefs and customs of others. It has inspired its people with the desire for integration and harmony. The future of India depends on the degree in which its traditional love-energy can continue to dominate its civilization. It is only through love that all the diversities of language, race and custom can be transcended.

III

Most of the essential values of my life have grown and developed out of my contact with the tribal people. They have influenced me far more than I have influenced them. They have taught me the importance of happiness, the importance of simplicity. Their own attachment to colour and rhythm has found an immediate response in my own mind.

My opposition to any kind of imperialism or colonialism has been made clear in the earlier part of this book. The change that has come over the world in my lifetime, whereby even little Sierra Leone, my father's diocese, has won its self-government, is wonderful. But there is a long way to go and great nations still show signs of wishing to impose their own ideas and at least economic domination on others.

Ever since I went to Oxford I have been a pacifist and I believe very strongly that the use of violence and force is no way of solving the disputes of mankind. This is so particularly in the tribal areas, where affection and understanding is the only way to achieve their integration with the rest of the country. The wrongs of Africa, the memory of Jomo Kenyatta in jail and the excesses of apartheid in South Africa have haunted me.

Among the tribes I came to see that war was not only a betrayal of life but a waste of life-saving resources. In my Sabarmati days pacifism was an ideal. It was only among the tribes that it became a reality. It seemed intolerable then that, when so many people were living in poverty, the men and money that might succour them should be diverted to so foolish a purpose as war. Nor is this enough: we must, as the Buddhists put it, suffuse every quarter of the globe with the gentle and creative spirit of love.

The problem of punishment and revenge became very urgent in the tribal hills. I need hardly say that I am an opponent of capital punishment and I feel rather ashamed that India, which leads the world in so many humane causes, should not yet have abolished it. It is futile and unfair to continue to regard attempted suicide as a crime. I remember seeing a poverty-stricken Gond in jail sentenced to a term of imprisonment for

trying to kill himself. He told me: 'My wife had died. I had no food. My whole body was full of pain. What was the point of going on living?' So long as society allows suicide-conditions to exist, it cannot rightly penalize those who try to escape them.

I am astonished that we have not made greater progress in prison-reform in India, where so many of our leading men have themselves spent many years in jail. The philosophy dominating our police-system and prisons is still that of punishment, the reaction of an outraged society towards trespassers against its code. Whatever may be done in other countries, we are certainly not paying enough attention to this in India.

When I was at school I was rather often subject to corporal chastisement. Masters used to beat us with a cane and the prefects used the heel of a walking-shoe. This was very painful, inflicted a large bruise that lasted for days, and gave a real shock to the nervous system. These beatings had the worst possible effect on me, made me jumpy and resentful, and I am ashamed to say that when I myself became a prefect I was energetic in administering them myself. Corporal punishment in schools should be abolished altogether and especially in the tribal areas where the people are extremely sensitive to any kind of physical indignity.

I will not, however, say anything about education, which is an inexhaustible subject, except to make one point, that we should not impose on children outdated religious ideas which the general sense of mankind has now abandoned and that we should begin from a very early age to teach the folly of war.

The tribal people awoke me to beauty in a way that even the paintings of my favourite Gauguin had not. Beauty is part of youth and the central crime of the exploiter is that he makes people old. Not disease alone but economic stress greys the hair and bends the shoulders of the peasants of India.

Looking back through my diaries I see that one of the things that has always haunted me is the importance of keeping people young. On one occasion when I had been greatly disappointed I wrote: 'It is most important that failure in one thing should not mean failure in everything. The essential

thing is that we should not let disappointment make us old. The greatest problem of all is to remain young. Our real enemy is not scandal, nor poverty nor hardship nor even our vices—but Time. It is love that brings Time to a halt.'

Many of the tribal people live in natural surroundings of exceptional loveliness but on the whole they do not make many beautiful things. But I have sought for them in remote villages and little huts where one would least expect them. It has not been easy and the total result of thirty years' seeking may not be very much. But it is something.

Beauty is so rare a thing
So few drink of my fountain.

Unhappily during the later years of the British regime a wave of ugliness passed over the whole of India. In spite of the protests of Tagore and the active opposition of Gandhi, vast quantities of cheap foreign goods poured into the country. The western world, says Herbert Read, 'has evolved a civilization of vast and all-pervasive vulgarity, a civilization without a decent face'. Its business-dominated economy soon gave India 'an architecture of poverty and meanness in the manufacture of everyday things'. It spared no aspect of Indian life. The harmonium corrupted Indian music; western idioms deeply disturbed Indian painting and sculpture; mass-produced textiles nearly killed the Indian handloom industry, and even when this was revived left it with a heritage of debased designs or purely utilitarian aims. The Indian home became a vulgarized, second-rate copy of lodgings in Balham or Tooting Bec. The old beauty was driven underground and the Indian countryside is, as a consequence of the Community Development movement, being defaced with the ugliest and most unsuitable architectural constructions that it has known in its long history. Many official buildings in the villages look like police lines and sometimes even like public lavatories. A development headquarters should not resemble a third-rate mental home, yet in many cases the plans for building our houses are lacking in both art and imagination and there is little attempt at adaptation to the rural scene.

Of all things, beauty must not be forgotten. Beauty, eternally

renewed in every generation, undiscouraged by big business or bad taste, is the most vital thing in the world and must triumph in the end. The hill people of India, itself a country which has always been dedicated to ideals of grace and loveliness, still have much beauty in their lives. By desiring to preserve it, I have not been trying to check their progress in the modern world: I have been helping them to inspire that world.

From my Oxford days I had been attached to the idea of *Aletheia*, the ultimate truth or reality, as it appears in the Johannine writings. Gandhi emphasized this idea for me in his teaching on truth as God. Among the tribes too I wanted the truth as a philanthropologist. The truth about the tribes makes its contribution to our knowledge of mankind, and it is only as the truth about them is known that they will be properly regarded and rightly treated.

In India one of the chief enemies of beauty and even of truth, especially in the tribal areas, is Puritanism and this is so important that I must give a few pages to discussing it.

IV

India is not, repeat not, by temperament, history or tradition, a Puritan country. Puritanism invaded her from the West, to some extent through Protestant missionaries who also, I suspect, influenced Gandhi more than he would have cared to admit. There is today a self-conscious and self-righteous Puritanism in the country which is destructive of many of the aesthetic values of life and, particularly when applied to simple village people, is ruinous to their happiness.

Perhaps the most fundamental of the Puritan's mistakes is a false sense of values. 'A Puritan', said G. K. Chesterton, 'is a person who pours righteous indignation into the wrong things.' He is for ever wanting to do other people good, never happy unless he is showing something up.

Puritanism must be carefully distinguished from asceticism. The Puritan did not seek to annihilate the sensitivity of the senses, or attain the passivity of the will or seclusion from the

world. He sought rather, as Crane Brinton has said, 'to select among his worldly desires those which would further his salvation, and to curb and suppress those which did not'. He thought that 'many pleasures to which the human race was addicted—light music, dancing, gambling, fine clothes, drinking and playgoing—were the kind of thing Satan liked' and so they were forbidden. But he did not believe in mortifying the flesh, in the manner of the Catholic monk or the Hindu sadhu. He liked to eat well, sleep well, and have a comfortable house.

One of the things that the Puritans have created throughout India is a self-consciousness about the beauty of the human body and a fear of its warm and breathing loveliness. This has particularly affected the tribal people who in former days had no artificial inhibitions and often went about half-clothed or even not clothed at all and were very beautiful when they did so. Today some state Governments have started regular campaigns to dress them up. One such Government has allotted a large sum of money to clothe the graceful people of Bastar in white cloth. In Rajasthan, the home of colour, a photographer once published photographs of some Bhil girls who were bare to the waist. The local Government's reaction was to issue thousands of white saris to these girls so that their shameful semi-nudity might be hidden. The result is that the girls, formerly so beautiful, with the combination of their own charms and the traditional coloured cloth of Rajasthan, today look like Hindu widows.

Puritanism has given its special attention to the cinema. Official censorship today makes it almost impossible to witness a realistic adult film as it should be seen by grown-up persons. At one time it was forbidden to screen anyone drinking alcohol and you were shown, for example, a party where whisky was served to the guests; they held their glasses in their hands and raised them to their lips, but when the dreadful moment of consummation between the lip and the glass was about to appear there was a flash and you then saw the glass lowered empty to the table.

A recent attack on the Indian cinema and its effect on children declares that 'kissing, embracing and obscene conversations

and songs' have come to dominate the screen and that film-goers cannot help 'seeing a hundred ways of making love'. This is characteristic of many ignorant criticisms of the film industry, for it is just not true, and as for seeing a hundred ways of making love in a cinema, even the author of the *Kama Sutra* could not, by stretching his imagination to the limit, think of more than eighty-four.

Censorship, whether of books, films or pictures, is ineffective and insulting, especially when it is combined with a lack of interest in the education of public taste. The subject of good taste, the development of a literary or moral fastidiousness, is ignored in our Universities and we try to gain by muddled and obscure legislation what could surely be better achieved by a trained public opinion.

Recently there has been a silly campaign about immoral cinema posters. Shortly after this started I went to Calcutta and decided to see some of them for myself. I was rather excited about it and went round the streets searching for something interesting. There was nothing that could possibly have excited even my fairly inflammable mind and, in fact, the cinema posters of India are of a remarkably mild character. But ardent social workers have been tearing down pictures which have any relation to the love between men and women, and this in a country where kissing is forbidden on the screen.

At one time there was even a move to destroy the marvellous sculptures of Khajuraho and Konarak. An important Congressman actually suggested to Gandhi that the erotic figures of Konarak should be removed and their place taken by statues of national leaders.

Prohibition is often attributed to Puritanism, but I am not quite sure about this, although it is the Puritans who have taken the most active part in trying to enforce it. My own objection to Prohibition is simply my lifelong objection to imposing things on people. I entirely agree with Bishop Magee when he said, at a time when there was a move to introduce it in England: 'If I were given the choice I should say that it would be better that England should be free than that England should be sober—for with freedom we must eventually obtain sobriety but, on the other hand, we should lose both freedom

and sobriety.' Not long ago the American President said that he did not know any figure in the world who was more committed to individual liberty than Mr Nehru, and on his own account I do not believe that he would ever impose prohibition on India.

I naturally look at this problem from the point of view of the tribal people and while I think that rice-beer is a thing which should not only not be banned but should actually be encouraged, for it is nothing more than a nourishing and palatable soup with a kick in it, there can be little doubt that distilled liquor, which has been positively supported by Governments in order to inflate their revenues, is injurious. If I had my way I would close the licensed liquor shops and would have a special branch of the Community Development Ministry to teach the brewing of beer.

The Puritans had a strong bout of activity shortly after Independence. For example, there was a fuss made about Indian girls even shaking hands, for it was pointed out that *panigrahanam*, the clasp of hands, is a symbol of marriage, and a Calicut writer wrote that 'India's womanhood has kept its standard of purity so high that only a husband, father or brother is allowed to touch a member of the opposite sex. In Indian households, after the girls grow up, even their brothers do not touch them. Indian girls should not link arms with men or shake hands with them'. This author continues that 'the time may not be far off when we find ourselves whirling round and round to the tune of luscious music under dim lights, our arms round the waist of other women'.

National leaders, especially Congress leaders, frequently appeal to the public to be good, though there is some divergence of opinion as to what goodness is. Very often they ask women to give up ornaments, sometimes they inveigh against lipstick and cigarettes. During the debate on Prohibition in the Constituent Assembly some speakers advocated a ban on tobacco as well as on alcohol.

In 1950 a Parliamentary *Who's Who* was published, in which there are some examples of this self-conscious do-goodism. Under 'recreations', one M.P. put 'Mixing among the poor and downtrodden peasants and workers for the uplift of their

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life through cooperative effort'. Another described his hobby as 'Uplift of the common man'.

I am not specially worried about Puritanism as it affects me, but for the tribes it is a cruel and wasteful creed,

The adroit castrator
Of art: the bitter negation
Of song and dance and the heart's innocent joy.
You have botched our flesh and left us only the soul's
Terrible impotence in a warm world.

There are many people, greatly admired by society, who have devoted their entire lives to robbing the tribal folk of what little they have. They turn them into vegetarians and thus take from them an essential item of their diet and give nothing in its place. By introducing Prohibition among them they rob them of a much-needed tonic and deprive their festivals and marriages of their former gaiety and even their funerals of some sort of comfort. By suggesting that their simple natural way of dress is indecent they lay on them a new economic burden. They cast a shadow on the sweet delights of young love. To steal colour, beauty and freedom from poor people is just as bad as to exploit them in more obvious ways.

I believe in compassionate and universal love towards the world, but this does not mean that one should be a jellyfish. To be too charitable to the wrong people can be a betrayal of those who need you. The following Malediction, therefore, is not really inconsistent: its chief fault is that it has not been very effective.

Mr Verrier Elwin's Monday Morning Malediction

Attend, my Muse, and hear the curse
Which on the tribesmen's foes I call
And listen as I now rehearse
On whom my maledictions fall.

On puritanic theorists
Looking at Nehru's plans askance,
Whose minds are clouded by the mists
Of prejudice and ignorance.

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On Uplift workers trying hard
To change, improve and interfere
In tribal custom, and to guard
Against the crimes of beef and beer.

On those who would assimilate
Into the dead Sanatan scheme
Of caste and custom those who late
Lived free and happy as a dream.

On those who're shocked by nakedness,
Who stare and snigger, peep, and try
The human form divine to dress
In millcloth which the poor must buy.

On those who trade in short and shirt,
Who think a singlet is the thing,
However quickly stained with dirt,
Who'd make a coolie of a king.

On moneylender, lawyer's tout,
Corrupt official, landlord; then
On the slick merchant growing stout
By cheating good and simple men.

On pastors tricking boys to church
By lying threats of hell and fire,
On those who nose about in search
Of happy love and young desire.

On those who take joy from the poor,
Who stifle laughter, mar delight,
Stop dancing, rob the ancient store
Of beauty, zest and colours bright.

On those debasing tribal art
In melody, design or form,
Who sentimental hymns impart
And on harmoniums perform.

On those who think morality
Can be a substitute for brains,
And, proud of their own purity,
Exult in peering into drains.

On every man whose empty heart
Is void of poetry and grace,
And his own dullness would impart—
On one and all my curse I place.

Yet as far as I am concerned, Puritanism has really been rather kind. I was the first person who dared, in my book *The Baiga*, to write freely about the sexual habits of an Indian tribe. In *The Muria and their Ghotul* I was even more outspoken and detailed, and I included in my collections of folksongs and folktales stories which, while of considerable psychological value, could hardly be read aloud in a drawing-room. Yet in all the hundreds of reviews which I have received, some of which have been very critical on other grounds, I do not think that anybody in India or any newspaper or journal has criticized me on this account. I have been attacked by orthodox religious people in England for what I have written about sex and by South African reviewers for what I have written about politics, but Indian critics as well as the Indian Government have been very generous to me, both for what I have written and also for the photographs I have reproduced in my various books, some of which on the stricter Puritan standards would be regarded as quite shocking.

As I wrote in *Motley*, Puritanism is not native to India. It is entirely alien to the minds of her greatest men. Its existence here today is due to a small faction who are dominated by their reaction against what they erroneously suppose to be 'Western' pleasures, by a subconscious envy of those who are more liberally educated and modern than themselves. It is of the first importance that its prurient and unclean influence should not inflict incurable wounds on the soul of this tolerant, beauty-loving and traditionally happy land. 'A nation', declared the first Indian Governor-General, 'needs joy as much as food and knowledge.'

V

When I think of the things that have influenced me and moulded my life, I put poetry first. Music, Western orchestral music, especially the works of Mozart and Beethoven or, in another mood, Stravinsky, has spoken to me, but not enough: my way of life has not allowed me to see a great deal of painting and sculpture in original. The advantage of poetry is that it is portable: even on tours where loads have to be kept to a minimum, you can slip a few slim volumes into your baggage. And so the poets have been my teachers: they have taught me to explore the secret places of my own heart; they have opened a window through which I can see my tribes with clearer eyes.

Then, first in time, were certain aspects of the Christian religion. I do not think that very much has remained,

But through the water pale and thin
Still shine the unoffending feet.

That part of Christianity which reflects the neo-Platonic philosophy, the mystical aspect, continues to be important and I still think that in the writings of some of the great Christian mystics (provided we turn a blind eye to the exclusive and narrow aspects of their teachings) there is a great deal to be found. I still feel a stirring of the heart when I think of some of the Catholic Modernists: when I recall, for instance, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, isolated in the lonely steppes of Asia without bread or wine, offering to God 'on the altar of the whole earth the work and sorrow of the world'.

I do not think anyone can understand me, nor can I understand myself, without realizing that for about five years of my life I intended to be a monk. I still love silence above all things. It is very difficult to find silence even in a village, but you can get it in the high mountains, and sometimes here in our house in Shillong at night there may be a few minutes of perfect silence, which is the most refreshing and strengthening thing I know. If I had the courage I would follow Gandhi's example and refuse to speak a word for at least one day a week or do

what we used to do in Poona and not speak for several hours every day.

The fundamental vows of the 'religious life' are Chastity, Poverty and Obedience. I was never particularly enthusiastic about Holy Chastity but Poverty did appeal to me and for many years I followed this ideal, even though today circumstances have forced me to abandon it. But at all times in my life I have found greater satisfaction in austerity than in luxury. To get what you want sometimes seems a little vulgar; to go without things is, I am certain, a great strength to the soul. I believe in Obedience, at least in the wider sense of loyalty.

After Christianity came Gandhi. Like everybody else I take from Gandhi's teachings those ideas which appeal to me and ignore the rest. The rejection of Gandhi's philosophy by India, which began even before his death, was symbolized when his body was taken to the pyre on a weapon-carrier. There are a lot of things I have never been able to accept in Gandhism, particularly its Puritan aspect, but there were at the same time many other things of great inspiration. The centrality of his teaching on truth, his doctrine of love and pacifism, and his austerity as distinct from his Puritanism continue to make a strong appeal. And I shall never lose the memory of that wonderful personality, at once warm and luminous, or the affection he gave me even when I least deserved it, so that still today I cannot hear his name without a thrill of pride and happiness.

I never met Tagore, though he influenced me even from my Oxford days. Curiously enough, I was not first attracted to him by his famous *Gitanjali*, but by his translations of the poems of Kabir, my very first introduction to Oriental verse.

There have always been two sides to me—one side, the world-renouncing, was captivated by Gandhi, but the other side of world-affirmation I found in Tagore. His belief in beauty, rhythm and colour, the fact that so many people in India seemed to be afraid of love and that he was not, awoke an enthusiastic response in my heart. 'He who wants to do good knocks at the gate; he who loves finds the gate open.' Everything about Tagore was positive, affirmative. He made life itself a work of art. He was interested in the tribal Santals and

inspired by them. Indeed, I have often felt that the tribal areas should be administered and their policies directed by poets and artists.

India was happy in having these two men to guide her destinies at the critical period when she was advancing towards Independence. Gandhi braced and stimulated people and his hard, stern message was essential to rouse his followers and nerve them for the task of non-violent opposition to a great Empire. But on the aesthetic side he was weak. He did not seem to care much for poetry, except religious poetry. He did little to encourage art. The handloom industry, through which he might have created a whole world of beauty, he used to make plain, unsightly garments in which many of his followers are still clothed, for he wanted to put India in prison-garments as a constant reminder of her status. Without Tagore India might have become dreary and colourless. She might have forgotten the loveliness of the world, the essential poetry of human beings and of the things they make. Tagore was a perfect counter-influence and the combination of the two men was needed both for India as a whole and certainly for myself. It is true that there are aspects of Tagore's teaching which I felt were a little woolly—such a definition, for example, of human life as 'the ceaseless adventure to the Endless Further'. But at its best his work remains supreme and is full of wisdom.

My appreciation of Tagore's work was increased by a wonderful performance of a dramatization of his poem, *Samanya Kshati*, by Uday and Amala Shankar. They came to Shillong and Amala visited us and later I visited Uday, and although I had never met them before, I felt that sense of immediate kinship which I am always seeking but do not, I must admit, very often find. Their presentation of Tagore's poem, which itself is a little masterpiece with its understanding of village life, was superb, and young Wasant said to me afterwards, 'Daddy, that is the best thing I have ever seen in my life.'

I have said a good deal about Gandhi's effect on me, especially in the early years, but in the last decade I have come much more under the influence of Mr Nehru. This is partly due to his inspiration simply as a great human being, partly to his policy for the tribes which I am sure is the chief hope

for them, if only people in India will pay sufficient attention to it. I have called myself 'a missionary of Mr Nehru's gospel' for the tribes. U. N. Dhebar, rather pessimistically, once said I was its only missionary.

In his foreword to my *Philosophy for NEFA*, Mr Nehru wrote generously, too generously, questioning this. He describes how his views on the tribes had 'developed under the impact of certain circumstances and of Verrier Elwin's own writings. It would be more correct to say that I have learnt from him rather than that I have influenced him in any way.'

But in fact Mr Nehru's influence on me has been paramount: he is so vitalizing a person that every time I meet him my ideas are enriched with new life. In him are combined Gandhi's austere devotion to truth and peace with the world-affirming attitude of Tagore; the hardness and realism of Gandhi with Tagore's warm love of beauty and children. Into our thinking about the tribes he has brought science, humanity and respect; and I liked the man who once remarked to me that 'the whole of the Prime Minister's tribal policy can be summed up in one word—humility'.

I have sometimes been accused of having a prejudice against Hinduism, which is ridiculous. It is true that I have expressed my opinion that certain aspects of Hinduism are not very good for the tribes. Hindu 'reformers' are apt to import worse things into tribal society than they banish from it. Hinduization of the tribes in central India has often meant a belief in caste that is more rigid even than that of the ancient Brahmins, and there are places where widow-remarriage, which formerly had never been questioned, has now been forbidden, and boys and girls are married at an earlier age than formerly so that they may be saved from 'sin'. A whole set of new taboos on food and drink have been imported. Worst of all, as Hinduism spreads in a tribal area the tribes tend to sink down to the bottom of the social scale.

But this is not real Hinduism. It is that parody of it which the Hindu leaders are doing their best to banish. True Hinduism has a power and beauty that no one acquainted with it can regard with anything but the deepest respect. You have to approach it of course, as you would approach poetry, with

a willing suspension of disbelief. The Hindus, even highly educated Hindus, have the capacity of accepting the most extraordinary ideas. But this does not matter very much. Above all the fads and irrational notions rises the great edifice of Hindu philosophy, painting, architecture and poetry. Its best men gain an exceptional strength from it and I myself have drawn a great deal of strength from it through them.

There is one trifling complication—that many Hindus make you feel uncomfortable because they are so much 'better' than you are. They make you feel worldly and luxurious—one does not smoke, another drinks only milk, a third has taken a vow never to read novels. Those of us who do all these things and many others sometimes find a Hindu friend just a little difficult to live up to.

In recent years perhaps the chief spiritual influence of my life has been a very simple form of Buddhism. This I met first in Ceylon, then in Thailand. I found its true spirit in little village-homes among the north-eastern mountains and in the Khampti temples in the foothills of NEFA. What little I know of Buddhism has not come to me through the gurus or philosophers but through very simple and ordinary people and in small, sometimes broken-down, shrines and temples.

On one side of me I am hardly a good subject for Buddhism. I love life; I love this good and kindly world; I love the rich provision of the senses, the enticements of the eye, the ear, the tongue; I like good food, beautiful things and people, children, amusing friends, tobacco, wine. My emotions are constantly entangled with causes, ideas and individuals.

But, as I have said already, there is another side to me which values a certain mental austerity and detachment. I like the good things of life but I can manage happily without them, and in fact, I generally have to. And above all, I have gradually come to see that unless I have peace inside me, my enthusiasm for life will not get me very far. The weakness that comes from anxiety, from small jealousies, bad temper, flurry and attachment, not only hinders a man's spiritual progress but even destroys his capacity to enjoy the good and beautiful things of this world. Inner strength is essential both for happiness and for good work.

Just at a time when I was feeling this rather acutely and growing impatient with the mean and shabby bonds that held me back, I began to study Buddhism. I do not pretend to understand its philosophy. It would be nice to be reborn as a better man; deep down inside me is the desire ultimately to attain something we can call Nirvana or, in another discipline, to reach Point Omega. But this is a long way off. For the moment at least let me control my temper, at least let me banish dislike from my heart.

The Buddhist scriptures speak of Five Hindrances which the pilgrim must overcome if he is to climb the mountain of reality and lose himself in the shining vision at the summit. He must put away the hankering after the world. He must banish the corruption of the will to injure, remaining with a heart free from ill-temper and purifying his mind of malevolence. He must be free of sloth and weakness and purify his mind of doubt. It is very important that he should 'put away flurry and worry, and with heart serene within, free himself of irritability and vexation of spirit'. These practical down-to-earth principles may seem elementary enough, yet it is only when we try seriously that we realize how hard it is to fulfil them, and even at the age of sixty I am staggered when I realize what little progress I have made. For to overcome the Five Hindrances demands ceaseless vigilance and untiring effort. It also requires a certain attitude of mind, the realization that the world is only a bridge, that its prizes are but shadows, that by pursuing happiness too eagerly we may destroy our happiness. The perfect vision, which sets the soul free, comes in serenity, from the contentment that is regardless of the world.

The building up of an inner strength, equipping the soul like a well-guarded frontier fort by gentleness, compassion and a love that extends to all the world, makes it possible for a man to tread the path of liberation. This is not achieved only by detachment: it must be very positive. 'As thou would'st guard against suffering and sorrow, so exercise the spirit of helpfulness and tenderness towards mankind.'

The first Hindrance is the hardest to overcome, for the world is attractive and I cannot accept the psychological trick which makes the way easy by regarding everything temporal, mundane

or human as unworthy of attention. I would not take passion out of love. Yet it is possible to bring an element of detachment into our attitude to the world and people.

The other Hindrances are more straightforward. A great sense of freedom comes to the heart that purifies itself of dislike, resentment, anger. Weakness and uncertainty are other obvious enemies. Anxiety and vexation of spirit, getting into a flap about things, are my own special Hindrances. I am the victim of various kinds of *angst*, especially when I travel, even when I am to meet people. From the early days when I was so constantly criticized and sometimes ostracized, I have suffered from a 'not-wanted' complex so that I often read into an unintentional coldness something that is not really there at all.

But what is exciting is the discovery that all these things can be overcome. The freedom and the gladness are within our grasp if only we are determined to have them. Dante had a special place of torment reserved for those who deliberately lived in sorrow and I meet many people who, instead of taking the freedom that is potentially theirs, cling to their grievances and hatreds, weaken themselves and lose their chance of happiness. A sense of grievance is the occupational disease of Government servants. But the wise man, as the Buddhists say, will free himself from bondage, bondage even to the gods—bondage to his own ideas, his rights, his privileges.

And when he has won his freedom, when the Five Hindrances have been put away from him, the pilgrim can look on himself as 'freed from debt, rid of disease, out of jail, a free man, and secure. And gladness springs up within him on his realizing that, and joy arises to him thus gladdened, and so rejoicing all his frame becomes at ease, and being thus at ease he is filled with a sense of peace, and in that peace his heart is stayed.'

VI

I am not sure about the meaning of life but I am sure that it has a meaning. Where many people go astray is in thinking that they must interpret this meaning in theological terms and

when they find that they cannot believe in a God or a specific religion; they give up too much: they lose their belief in the meaning of life altogether. I do not think this is necessary. I am not greatly concerned whether there is a God or not or whether we can look forward to some kind of life after death. I certainly do not see any point in putting down here my views on these obscure and mysterious subjects. After all, God does not depend on our votes for his existence. He is either a fact or He is not. In the same way some kind of future life is or is not a fact, and my little opinion is not going to alter it and I do not think it is even going to alter me. In the old days when we believed in the now generally discarded doctrine of rewards and punishments in a future life for what we did in this, it was another matter. But most thinking people today, whatever their theology may be, do not really believe that there is some unseen accountant noting down and totting up our merits and demerits against a final settlement.

I have, however, found through contemplation experiences of such power as to suggest that our short human life on this planet is not the final word. In the ecstasy of human love, in the appreciation of beauty, in the recognition of goodness we have brief glimpses of a greater love and a greater reality than anything we can know in our ordinary lives. The mystical experience, to my mind, is the strongest argument for something beyond ourselves.

But I do not think my own salvation or my own theological or philosophical opinions are of great importance. It is interesting to speculate; theology is the queen of sciences. But it is not belief that saves a man.

What then should we aim at during our life on earth? In spite of what I have said, we have to begin with ourselves because, unless we have some measure of self-realization, some achievement of peace and love inside ourselves, we shall not be equipped for the tasks which give the ultimate meaning to our lives. We may find this peace, this love, through religion (the realization of 'this thing'), through poetry or art, through joy or suffering—it does not matter how it comes to us, but we must have it in some measure. We must learn to interpret our experiences in spiritual terms.

And in the context of this, let us turn to our immediate neighbourhood, to what, on the human, down-to-earth plane, is worth having.

The attainment of wealth or high office, even if it is possible, is not an end in itself. I put first, among the good things possible to ordinary people like myself, a happy home. There is no greater fulfilment than the love of wife and children who love you in return. There is no greater discipline or challenge to self-denial than to live in a family which you take seriously.

And then there must be some kind of work that is worth doing. In the Tawang lamasery there is a painting of a water-carrier who performed his duties so faithfully that he is now regarded as a saint. The work may be of any kind provided—to put it in religious terms—it is done as an act of worship. Most fortunate are those who are captured by a cause, such as the well-being of the tribal people, which demands a lifelong devotion, even though it may open the door to anxiety, frustration and deep sorrow in sympathy with others.

In T. S. Eliot's *The Cocktail Party*, Celia is inspired by somewhat similar ideas to mine (except that I had not been crossed in love). She has to face the problems of both the spiritual and the physical forest, and Reilly suggests that compassion may be a clue towards finding the way out. She replies:

But even if I find my way out of the forest
I shall be left with the inconsolable memory
Of the treasure I went into the forest to find
And never found, and which was not there
And perhaps is not anywhere? But if not anywhere,
Why do I feel guilty at not having found it?

I too went to find a treasure. It was, I think, the perfect vision of love, truth and beauty, for even then I was thinking in those terms, though the vision was not to be found in solitary contemplation but in the active impulses of compassionate love, and I searched for it in the diseased, the unhappy, the dispossessed. I did not find the Vision Splendid; perhaps the discovery of the Vision Squalid was ultimately more important. In the end human beings proved to be so needy—and so lovable—that God had to take a back seat. From the very beginning I craved for a reality which was hidden from me by the artificiality.

however gracious, of Oxford and by the urgent political excitements, however idealistic, of Sabarmati.

Of course, to go to the physical forest is not necessary to find the treasure that every man seeks. Heaven and hell are within ourselves. A man must make his pilgrimage over the rugged uplands of his own spirit, and the search goes on wherever one may be. I did not find the ultimate treasure in the forest; perhaps it is not there: it may not be anywhere.

And yet I suspect that there is a treasure which every man may find if he searches for it.

That treasure, I believe, is love, the brother and ally of peace, in all its variety and depth. To quote from my Patel lectures again:

Love illuminates knowledge; it gives meaning to beauty; it is the heart of virtue; it is the dearest guest of the home. Love's great artillery is more powerful than the weapons of hatred and, properly directed, can overcome them. Love gives dignity and stature to every man—it chastens the proud and redeems the sad, the guilty and the ashamed, and gives to the poorest a meaning and reason for life. It is, as Traherne said, 'the most delightful and natural employment of the soul of man'. It is, indeed, natural, for man is born, he exists, to co-operate, to live in harmony with his fellows, not to compete or conflict with them. This is what is to be really human, for when man is brought by love to realize his part in the life of the whole world, he no longer is open to the isolating power of loneliness; his personality is expanded to a sense of unity with all things. Love brings him freedom from fear. It brings him peace and fills his soul with a gentle power that will unite conflicting forces.

Love and the duties it imposes is the real lesson of the forest. I did not find spiritual enlightenment, indeed. Some people may say that I found spiritual disaster, but I did discover urgent and challenging demands. Among very poor and exploited people there was the need to maintain those imponderable values that give dignity to the life of man; to restore to them their self-respect, the feeling of being loved. There was the necessity of working for peace and reconciliation—there is no greater cause to which a man can dedicate himself. There was the need of reverence, reverence for all life, reverence too for

the ideas, the pitiful hopes and aspirations of the children of mankind. Another thing which became very clear in the forest was the importance of 'a steady will for a new social order', and of very practical measures to banish poverty. Above all, I felt that there was no greater expression of love than to work for beauty, freedom and happiness, to preserve it where it existed and restore it where it was lost.

The realization of these things may not be the great treasure of which the saints and mystics speak. But in this life we must do what we can; we may not reach to the heavens, but there is plenty to do on earth.

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The Fall of a Sparrow

*. . . there's a special providence
in the fall of a sparrow.
Hamlet, V.ii.232-3*

SALIM ALI

To 'Hawk' (R.E. Hawkins)
for first instilling the thought that
my story might be worth telling

Prologue

Living three-quarters of a century with no thought of writing one's memoirs and then suddenly deciding to do so is a bad business, I realize. With practically no archival material by way of preserved correspondence, diaries, etc., and only tricky memory to fall back on, the task is unsatisfactory. In the circumstances it took considerable persuasion from friends and 'fans' to evoke in me the courage to write an autobiography. This is, however, a useful way of letting curious people know how and whence I contracted the germs of ornithology at a time when the disease was practically unknown among Indians, and of showing the development of my scientific interest in birds. The writing of this narrative, under duress as it were, began eight years ago without any proper planning or chronological sequence—more or less in the nature of random recollections and reminiscences jotted down lackadaisically in bits and pieces, as the spirit moved. But for the kindly though merciless nagging of well-meaning friends and relations it would have floundered in the mire of procrastination.

To the many—too numerous to identify individually—who have helped to recall long-forgotten happenings and who have helped in other ways, I am deeply grateful. Most of all, my thanks are due to R.E. Hawkins (Hawk) for agreeing so cheerfully to sort out the jumbled narrative and reduce the chaos to some semblance of order. Among the others to whom I feel specially beholden are J.S. Serrao, possessed of an enviable memory, who has been my indispensable aide and archivist for over three decades; and to the enthusiastic Archana Mehrotra who did all the tedious typing and retyping of drafts, and who by constant prodding and helpful suggestions was largely responsible for bringing to a close a venture that had begun to

seem unending. I am aware that under the circumstances many incidents and personalities that should have found a place in the story may have inadvertently been overlooked. But eighty eventful years is a long time to pack into these few printed pages, and all I can do at this stage is to deplore their non-inclusion.

SÁLIM ALI

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- 71 BNHS team birding in Keoladeo National Park, 1980. (*Photo by Peter Jackson*)

FACSIMILES (*following plates*)

- 1 Facsimile of a letter from Hugh Whistler to the author, dated 31 March 1936.

- 2 Facsimile of a letter from Erwin Stresemann to the author, dated 14 April 1956.
- 3 Facsimile of the author's field notes on *Anthus rufulus*.

Special Providence

Until a few years ago the question of how my interest in birds originated never bothered me or anyone else. I grew up with it and the oddness was taken for granted—that was that. It was only much later, after the question was put to me by an inquisitive press reporter, that I began giving thought to the matter. I then realized that, considering my early background, his query was actually less irrelevant than it first appeared. Eighty-seven years is a long time to remember details, but I vividly recall our rambling family house in Khetwadi, a middle-class residential quarter of Bombay, in the now overcrowded area between Girgaum and Charni Road. Here I lived as the youngest of an orphaned family of five brothers and four sisters: my mother Zeenat-un-nissa had died when I was about three and my father Moizuddin two years earlier. We grew up under the loving care of a maternal uncle, Amiruddin Tyabji, and his childless wife, Hamida Begam, who were more to us all than any parents could be. They were guardians as well to a miscellaneous assortment of other orphans and children of absentee friends and relations of different ages, and very variable—sometimes even dubious—quality. There was no one in that very mixed ménage who, as far as I can remember, was at all interested in birds, except perhaps as ingredients of an occasional festive *pulao*.

‘Nature conservation’ was then a phrase only rarely heard. Partridges and quails were abundantly and freely sold in the market, and six to eight birds per rupee of the former and sixteen to twenty of the latter made them cheap enough as a variant, on high days and holidays, of the eternal *murgbi*,

costing perhaps 6 to 8 annas (35 to 50 paise). The birds used to be brought alive to the Kherwadi house, crowded in round flat bamboo baskets with a burlap flap on top, and 'lawfully' *halalled* (had their throats slit). I well remember how, when about ten years old, Suleiman (a nephew two years my junior) and I used to rescue a few of these unfortunates on the sly and keep them as pets in a rough-and-ready open-air pen, made from wire mesh and old packing cases, with the help of Nannoo, the trusty old cook and factotum of the family and us children's unfailing friend, abettor and accomplice in all such enterprises. It is a wonder to all of us who knew him, and increasingly so in the context of current servant problems, how Nannoo ever found time to volunteer for all these 'extra-curricular' activities, and always with so much zest and cheerfulness. He ran the kitchen single-handed, cooking two full meals a day for seldom less than ten people, mostly children and teenagers with healthy appetites. This involved scraping and cleaning pots and pans (for he had no kitchen help), kneading the *ātā* and baking a pile of *chapatis* which, in a sporting mood, he would challenge us to finish faster than he could produce while squatting on the ground at a smoky wood fire *choola*. The 'aviary' was run in partnership by Suleiman and myself and it gave us immense joy to sit beside the enclosure and watch the behaviour and action of the birds—among which our favourites were named—for hours together. On school holidays it was certainly a far pleasanter way of passing time than doing homework.

We made as frequent excursions as our pocket money of Rs 2 per month would permit to the bird section of Crawford Market to see if any new birds had arrived which could be added to our collection. In the early days our interest was confined chiefly to game birds, and our collection consisted of Grey and Painted Partridges, and Grey, Rain and Bush Quails. Occasionally when feeling particularly flush, as after a birthday celebration, we would acquire a pair or two of Grey Junglefowl or Red Spurfowl. But I never was nor have been successful in keeping captive birds and other animals or pets alive for long. After repeated disappointment and failure I finally gave up trying; and though I have from time to time in

later years kept birds for various experimental purposes, I have always released them thereafter.

About this time, when I was about nine or ten, the father-uncle with whom we lived and whom we boys greatly hero-worshipped for his shikar exploits presented me with an air gun. I well remember that it was a nickel-plated 500-shot repeater 'Daisy'—a popular make in those days, more toy than gun. Through a hole behind the front sight you had to drop up to 500 round lead pellets of BB size into a hollow cylinder round the barrel; after each shot you worked a hand lever to compress the spring which at the same time automatically slipped the next pellet into the breech. It was not much of a weapon as air guns go, extremely inaccurate and temperamental in its performance and needing a good deal of manipulation and allowances in aiming before you could hit a mark at 30-feet range. However, a repeater air gun was an innovation and as such was the envy of my little companions, some of whom possessed equally innocuous single-shot affairs. To own such a 'sophisticated' piece of weaponry added greatly to my ego and I loved to show it off. In spite of its shortcomings I soon acquired enough cunning with it to shoot house sparrows, of which a colony used to be in permanent residence in the stable. Spilt grain from the horses' nose-bags, sundry holes in the ceiling and walls for nests provided them with bountiful living. We boys, being correctly brought up as god-fearing Muslim children, knew that although the sparrow fell within the category of lawful meat it could only be eaten provided the birds had been *halalled* in the ordained manner. Under fear of dire consequences in the hereafter, and with timely warning from our elders, we were usually scrupulous in observing the ritual, but even at the risk of purgatory were sometimes tempted to cheat by cajoling Nannoo to cut their throats even after the birds were long dead and cold. Nannoo taught us how to deal with the sparrows after the correct obsequies had been performed, and some of us little boys became expert at transforming them, with *masala*, a blob of ghee and a frying-pan, into delicious morsels.

The very first bird note I ever made was during this era, at

the age of nine or ten. It concerned an incident in the course of one of those sparrow hunts in that Khetwadi stable. Wooden pegs had been driven into the wall, on which harness was hung. One of these pegs had come off, leaving a hole in the wall which became a coveted nesting place for the sparrows. The observation made was on a female sparrow nesting in that hole. Crude and incomplete as it was when rediscovered nearly sixty years later, the gist of the note seemed relevant enough for publication in *Newsletter for Birdwatchers*, more or less in its original form, thus:

1906/7. The cock sparrow perched on the nail near the entrance to the hole while the female sat inside on the eggs. I ambushed them from behind a stabled carriage and shot the male. In a very short while the female acquired another male who also sat 'on guard' on the nail outside. I shot this male also, and again in no time the female had yet another male in attendance. In the next 7 days I shot 8 male sparrows from this perch; each time the female seemed to have another male in waiting who immediately stepped into the gap of the deceased husband.

I am rather proud of this note because though intended as a record of my prowess as a hunter and made long before I was conscious of any possible relevance, it has proved more meaningful in the light of present-day behavioural studies.

Each year when school vacations began in summer the entire Khetwadi ménage migrated to Chembur—now a noisy part of metropolitan Bombay but in those days a delightfully quiet sylvan haven of secondary moist-deciduous jungle set among outlying hillocks of the Western Ghats. The highest of these, Trombay Hill, just over 300 metres and the venue of our youthful mountaineering exploits, now forms part of the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre's estate. It was thickly wooded in parts till uniformly denuded into a veritable Rock of Gibraltar by the relentless fuel-hunters of the janata colony which was established round its base after the Second World War. The Chembur of those days is memorable for its peaceful jungle flavour and the considerable wildlife it held despite its closeness to the city. The nearest railway station, Kurla, was three miles by foot or bullock cart. There were no industries, shopping facilities, schools or other social amenities in the

neighbourhood. Motor cars and buses had not invaded the scene and practically no commuters resided in the locality. Such rare townfolk as one occasionally met were, like ourselves, vacationing visitors or absentee landholders on weekend trips to their farms or mango orchards, of which there were a flourishing number around. The Chembur area has long enjoyed a well-deserved reputation for the excellence of its mangoes, especially alphonso and pairi. Unfortunately, such orchards as have not already succumbed to housing or industrial development are fast disappearing in the wake of rocketing land values with the growth and expansion of the city. The mango trees, once so lovingly tended, have vanished or stand gaunt and neglected spectres, overrun by the parasitic growth of *bandha* (*loranthus*) and awaiting the vandal's axe. Most of the animal sounds, so evocative of our schoolboy vacations, have been long since silenced one by one with the inexorable encroachment of 'civilization'. The familiar howling of jackals at dusk and all through the night, inseparable from my Chembur memories, ceased years ago, and hyenas, scarce even then, have completely disappeared. The spirited song of the Magpie-Robin which regaled us at daybreak as we lay half awake, reluctant to leave our cosy beds, is one of the earliest and most cherished of my ornithological memories. They bring back those matchless, carefree school vacations in Chembur every time I listen to a Magpie-Robin's song, no matter where.

Like idle and thoughtless schoolboys everywhere, with no notion of the ethics of sport (whatever they be!) or conservation instilled into us either at home or in school—on the contrary with a certain Victorian aura attached to hunting and shooting as a manly sport—we roamed the countryside with our air guns, making a target of every little bird trusting enough to permit a close approach. I recall my juvenile elation if I managed to drop a honeysucker or similar small bird in this vandalistic sport. Happily, such occasions were rare. Part of a more regular hunting programme of us gangsters was to visit the tiny neighbouring hamlet of Deonar near sunset when large numbers of House Sparrows collected to roost among the stacks of rice-straw, piled up in trees to keep it out of reach of hungry

cattle. The sparrows came just as it was getting dark and hurriedly tunnelled their way into the straw, and our strategy was to keep ready for their arrival and sportingly pot only the males before they disappeared within. The forays to Deonar often served a dual purpose since the family supply of eggs, vegetables and milk came from this village, and we were commissioned to bring back the hut-to-hut egg collection along with our own bag of 'game'. (Eggs cost one *phadia* or 4 pies or 1/48 of the old rupee!) As far as I can recall it was at this point, and as a fortuitous offshoot of one of these sparrow-hunting expeditions, that my first 'scientific' interest in birds was born.

While one of my victims was about to be *halalled* I suspected something was wrong with the bird: it looked like any other female sparrow I sometimes got except that it had a yellow patch on the throat, like a curry-stain. My main concern at this moment was whether this sparrow was lawful meat for a God-fearing little Muslim or not. Unwilling to jeopardize my prospects in the hereafter, I prevented the *halalling* and instead carried the corpse back to the house to obtain an authentic pronouncement (*fatwa*) from Uncle Amiruddin, the shikari of the family. He examined the sparrow carefully and agreed that it was a different bird, apparently not having noticed one like it before. Uncle Amiruddin was one of the earliest Indian members of the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS), having joined it soon after its founding in 1883, and became an active participant in its work. He gave me a letter of introduction to the then Honorary Secretary, Mr W.S. Millard, the head of Phipson & Co., Wine Merchants, asking his help in identifying the bird. My very first contact with the Society, then housed in the premises occupied by Phipsons, came about in this way. That visit was a thrilling experience and is still fresh in my memory.

Incidentally this building at the corner of Forbes Street and Apollo Street was the former residence of the Chief Justice of the Bombay High Court. In those days there was practically no social contact between English people and Indians, much less so for boys of my age. The sahibs lived in the insulated little Englands they had created for themselves; their exclusive clubs

were defiled by no black man's shadow, excepting only the 'bearers' who poured out their *chhota* and *bara* pegs. They had built around themselves a mythical aura about their nobility and greatness and superior virtues, about carrying the black man's burden and all that. This myth took such firm root that even after forty years of independence it still survives. It was a rare occurrence for a middle-class Indian to meet and talk to an Englishman, official or otherwise, except purely on matters of business. A schoolboy's only contact with the English was perhaps when his classroom was visited annually by an educational inspector who, of course, always had to be a sahib.

I remember the feeling of nervousness—almost of fear and trembling—at the prospect of meeting a full-grown sahib face to face with which I entered the quaint old single-storeyed building through its magnificent solid teakwood portal. After due checking of my bona fides I was led up the shallow coir-carpeted steps by a supercilious khaki-liveried sepoy, the flanking walls covered with mounted heads of shikar trophies in terrifying profusion. Upstairs, in a corner of the wooden-floored room chock-a-block with desk showcases displaying seashells, butterflies, birds' eggs and miscellaneous natural history bric-à-brac, the walls were still more crowded with skulls and mounted heads of tigers and leopards staring glassily down at the intruder, or snarling with bared fangs more ferociously than they ever did in life. I was piloted to the sanctum sanctorum through this welter of animal remnants, stumbling over stuffed crocodiles and hoofs of sambar floor-rugs. In a corner of this congested junk shop, which was the Society's museum in those days, and partitioned off by swing doors, sat, leaning over his desk, the genial bald-headed Walter Samuel Millard, the Honorary Secretary.

This must have been somewhere in 1908, and my first contact with the BNHS was later to become such an important element in the shaping of my life and career. All my nervousness vanished completely in the face of the charming kindness and consideration of Mr Millard. I then realized that perhaps *all* white men were not the ogres our youthful fancy had painted them from stories of unsavoury incidents on tea plantations

and confrontations in railway carriages. As Mr Millard peered at me over his reading glasses I fumbled out my credentials and the little paper packet containing the mystery bird. He identified it at a glance as a Yellowthroated Sparrow (*Petronia xantho-collis*) and bid me follow him to the reference cabinets, from one of which he produced several stuffed specimens for confirmation. There were numerous other species of sparrows in the collection, which he took great pains to show me, and explained the differences and points for identification. He patiently opened drawer after drawer for me to see the hundreds of different birds found in the Indian Empire, and I believe it was at this moment that my curiosity about birds really clicked. Mr Millard gave me a few bird books from the small library to read, and this is how I made my first acquaintance with Edward Hamilton Aitken's (EHA's) inimitable classics—*Common Birds of Bombay* and *A Naturalist on the Prowl*. They spurred my interest, and I have since read them again and again over the last sixty years or more with undiminished pleasure and admiration. At the request of the publishers I had the rare privilege of annotating the first for a new edition brought out in 1946 under the altered title of *Common Birds of India*, which carries a short biographical sketch of the author by my friend Loke Wan Tho.

Mr Millard encouraged me to make a collection of birds as the best way of learning about them, and offered to have me trained at the Society in skinning and preserving specimens and keeping proper notes about them. He introduced me to a young Englishman in the next room who had lately been recruited as the first paid Curator of the Society. This was Norman Boyd Kinnear who, later, after World War I, joined the Bird Room of the British Museum (Natural History) and ended up as Sir Norman Kinnear, Director of the Museum, in 1947–50. Kinnear, a dour Scotsman, appeared to me rather stand-offish and reserved, and therefore outwardly at least more like the *pukka* sahib of our youthful conception. Behind this facade of stand-offishness, however, he was rather shy, but kindly and helpful, and did much to encourage and foster my new-born enthusiasm, both during his curatorship of the

Society and later from the Bird Room of the British Museum. He put me under the training of two young assistants, S.H. Prater and P.F. Gomes. They showed me over the entire bird collection and initiated me into the art of skinning, stuffing, preparing and labelling bird and mammal specimens for a study collection. Both these persons remained in the Society's employ to the end of their working lives. Prater, of whom I shall have more to say later, distinguished himself in several ways: as the Society's Curator in its most consolidative years, as a leader of the Anglo-Indian community in Western India, and as its elected representative in the Constituent Assembly and Bombay Legislative Council till his retirement and emigration to England in 1948. P.F. Gomes, a rather stolid pachydermic Goan, was in charge of the Society's insect collection in his later years, a function which he discharged with phlegmatic efficiency. I remember him chiefly for his neat handwriting, which can still be seen in the old accession registers of the Society, and on many of the labels in the reference collections. I remember Gomes also for invariably referring to tendons (while teaching me to skin) as 'nostrils', and that with a soft Portuguese 't' which was puzzling at first but continued to amuse me the rest of the time.

The fortuitous incident of the Yellowthroated Sparrow opened up undreamt vistas for me. Thenceforth my reading tended progressively towards books on general natural history, and particularly birds. Illustrated books on Indian birds were virtually non-existent in those days, and indeed for many years later, and there was little available to help a beginner in identifying and learning about the birds around him. The absence of illustrated books was in my opinion the most serious obstacle to the development of bird-watching as an outdoor hobby among Indians generally. Thus, most people who contributed to bird study in India in the early years were foreigners—mostly Englishmen—who had grown up in their home country in the time-honoured British natural history tradition and were already familiar with bird lore—if only as egg-collecting schoolboys—before they came out to India. Spurred by the wealth of bird life around them here, and perhaps by the opportunities as well

as the social constraints in the lonely life of a district officer in the backwoods, some of them took to sport shooting and natural history as a serious pastime, or to collecting bird skins and eggs. Many blossomed in course of time into scholarly naturalists or highly competent ornithologists who helped to lay the foundation of scientific natural history in India. Jerdon's *Birds of India* (1864) and later the four-volume publication on Indian avifauna by Oates and Blanford (1898) were adequate for identification, provided you had an elementary familiarity with birds, the necessary ferreting zeal and a specimen in hand. The lack of illustrated field guides and good field glasses, however, seriously inhibited the cult of birdwatching as we know it today. There is no doubt that I owe the beginning of my serious interest in birds to that enigmatic Yellowthroated Sparrow and the chain of events it brought in its train.

Schooldays

Till I was eight or nine I attended with two of my sisters (Akhtar and Kamoo) a mission school for girls at Girgaum with a mouthful of a name—Zanana Bible Medical Mission Girls High School (ZBMM for short), since rechristened Queen Mary's High School for Girls. Little boys were admitted but, as in my case, had to leave when they ceased to be girls! Later my greatest joy at being entered in St Xavier's, where all my brothers have been in their time, was the prospect of being able to commute to school (at Dhobi Talao; in those days the locality was known as Money School) and back by horse tram, which held a special romance for children. There was always keen competition among us schoolboys to capture the front bench, just behind the driver, to watch the fascinating operations, and we envied the driver for all the fun we imagined he was having. Horse trams came in two sizes, drawn by a single horse—in which case it was a huge Waler imported from Australia—or by a pair of Arabs, mostly from Iraq. They were always kept in beautiful condition, the former being fitted with enormous pith topees, like the white sahibs, for protection from the tropical sun, with the ears protruding through two holes. The trams had rows of long benches of five or six seats one behind the other and facing front, each bench entered from the side. The driver stood in front of the first bench and urged the horses by tapping the metal-ferruled end of his whip, held upright in a bracket, on the wooden floor. He had a revolving brake arm (lever) regulated by a ratchet arrangement for stopping the tram while drawing in the reins. There were no

fixed halts as far as I remember, but the tram slowed down or stopped whenever a passenger wanted to get on or off. Pedestrians and handcarts were kept off the track by a clanging bell under the driver's heel. For supplementary horse power required on gradients, as when going over a bridge, an extra horse with attendant was kept ready at the foot of the bridge and was skilfully hitched on by the attendant while the tram was in motion. The attendant then jumped on next to the driver till the top of the rise was reached, when he jumped off the running tram, unhitched the extra horse and led it back to the foot of the bridge to await the next tram, and so on.

I used to get 2 annas (about 12 paise) every day for the tram fare to school (Money School Terminus) and back to Grant Road Junction (Play House, locally better known as 'pila house'), which was the tramhead for our locality, Khetwadi. There was a single-horse shuttle service every fifteen minutes or so between Money School Terminus and Crawford Market, past St Xavier's High School where one had to change to the Main Line into a two-horse tram for Grant Road via Pydhoni. Horses were usually changed at Pydhoni where a number of fresh relays were kept ready harnessed. It frequently happened in my case that the tram fare was misappropriated for *bhelpuri* during the tiffin break, leaving me the unpleasant prospect of walking home after school through a short-cut of back lanes and byways, perhaps a couple of miles. On one such day I absent-mindedly got into the tram at Money School Terminus, and realized only when I put my hand into my pocket for the fare that it was empty! The kindly, bearded old conductor, a UP man—as were many employees in the Bombay Tramway Company—who knew me as a daily customer must have noticed my embarrassment, for instead of putting me off the tram as I feared, he quietly issued a ticket and consoled me paternally saying not to worry and that I could pay him tomorrow! True, the risk of an anna was not about to break his back, but which conductor in this mercenary age of rush and endemic incivility would ever be so considerate to an impetuous and frightened little schoolboy? It was a gesture I can never forget. It developed an almost filial relationship between

us and I was not slow to cash in on his good nature by falling to the temptation of mid-day *bhelpuris* more often thereafter!

In my school career there is little to boast about and perhaps the less said about it the better. I was average in most subjects, somewhat above in geography and games and considerably below in maths. I was said to be good in English and sometimes had the satisfaction of having my essays read out aloud to the class by the teacher. Later in life, in 1934, I found to my astonished disbelief that I had been included in an anthology of English prose by Indian writers, selected and edited by an Englishman, E.E. Speight, Senior Professor of English at Osmania University in Hyderabad. The book, meant for supplementary reading by college students, bears the grandiose title *Indian Masters of English* and has among my 'co-masters' such distinguished names as Rabindranath Tagore and Sarojini Naidu! I managed to take all the school examination hurdles as they came, but uniformly without distinction; the only school prize I ever got being for 'Good Conduct' when I was in the fourth class—prophetically enough a book entitled *Our Animal Friends*. The outdoor games I liked best were hockey, tennis and badminton, at which I was perhaps slightly above average. I also enjoyed football, and although I sometimes did play cricket I never got into the spirit of the game. However, I enjoy watching good, fast cricket in moderate doses, not a full five-day Test! I love riding but have not had as much opportunity to ride as I would have wished, except for a short period in Dehra Dun. Perhaps the sport-shooting of birds and big-game hunting have always been my No. 1 favourites, and I like to think that in these my performance has been somewhat better than average. It is not so much the killing or the size of the bag that matters with me, but the lure of the outdoor and wild places and the general atmosphere of thrill and excitement with the occasional spice of danger that makes the overall experience so enjoyable. However, to get back to school.

Around the time when I was thirteen or fourteen years old (1910) I suffered from chronic headaches, the cause of which was never diagnosed. But the doctors thought that a change of air might help. A half-year's break in school terms was prescribed

to my undisguised delight and my brother Hamid and his wife Sharifa sportingly offered to take charge of me as the dry climate of Sind, it was thought, would be beneficial. At that time Hamidbhai was Superintendent of Land Records in Sind and head of the Tapedar (land surveyors) school in Hyderabad, an assignment that involved extensive touring throughout the province in winter. They lived in a picturesque castle-like house of sandstone on the edge of the town of Hyderabad known as Jacob Castle, for it was built by General Jacob in 1840 or thereabouts, soon after the annexation of Sind. The building had two round towers or battlements at each end, on either side of the main entrance, connected by an open terrace. My living room was on the first floor with the bathroom in the tower at the same level. The castle was situated on slightly raised ground, hardly a hillock, in a mud-walled compound. This compound was a thin, rambling jungle of *kandi* and *babul* trees and an ideal habitat for warblers and other small birds. Although I had seen *baya* nests when holidaying in Chembur, they were usually on tall date palms and tantalizingly out of reach. I remember my joy on finding them on low *babul* trees in this compound, where they could be reached and robbed without much difficulty, I being an avid egg collector in those days. One of Hamidbhai's *chaprasis* was a *hubshi* giant named Oors. He was the one who acted as 'staff shikari' and looked after the guns and shikar equipment, and whose self-appointed job it was to gather local information of where game—especially partridge, quail, duck and snipe—could be had, collect beaters, and make all the necessary *bandobast* for his master's shoots when on tour. Oors was my constant companion and instigator in matters of shooting, and particularly helpful in nest-finding and collecting birds' eggs.

One of my vivid memories of this period is driving out one morning with Hamidbhai in his tonga for a partridge shoot at a place called Tando Hyder, a few miles out of Hyderabad, in the starry dark of an early dawn with Halley's Comet looming brilliantly overhead, and wondering if any of us would be alive when it made its next scheduled appearance in 1986. At eighty-nine 1986 still seems a long way ahead, but considering the

toughness and durability of the Abdulali breed (grandfather 114, uncle 103, an aunt 100, a sister 97), I begin to suspect that this may not prove as improbable an event as it then seemed.

After missing one year of school because of those mysterious headaches I managed, but only just, to scrape through the matriculation examination of Bombay University in 1913, with the distinction of ranking perilously near the bottom of the list of something like 3,000 candidates who appeared that year.

But to go back a little earlier, in the years around 1908 one of my cherished ambitions was to become a big-game hunter, and a famous one if possible. Much of my reading, which admittedly was never very avid or profound, consisted of articles and books on natural history and shikar adventures such as Sanderson's *Thirteen Years among the Wild Beasts of India*, and later, Capt. A.I.R. Glasfurd's *Rifle and Romance in the Indian Jungle*, Theodore Roosevelt's *African Game Trails*, and others by the veteran British hunters in India during the nineteenth century. 'Two or three rhinos or tigers before breakfast' seems unbelievable at the present time. This kind of remark, common in such books, gives an idea of what the forests and wildlife in those days must have been. As I have said before, we greatly hero-worshipped my uncle Amiruddin, who to us was the authority on Indian shikar. Most of his exploits, however, were as a guest of sporting rulers of various Indian states, conducted in royal style, and I am not sure if he ever organized any shikar trips on his own or was particularly knowledgeable about the animals he shot, or of jungle lore. His armoury was rather antique by modern standards. It consisted of a double-barrel 12-bore vintage English-made hammer gun, a combination double-barrel 12-bore/450 black powder rifle made for the Army and Navy Co-operative Society, an elegant but old-fashioned 16-bore double-barrel hammer rifle with Damascus steel barrels, made to order by a well-known French gunmaker of the period around 1870 with gold inlay and monogram, and a military Martini-Henry cavalry carbine 577/450 with adapter tube for .25 ammunition. In addition there was a walking stick pin-fire gun 410-bore, a 32 gauge so-called 'rook rifle' rim fire single-barrel smooth-bore hammer gun for short ball

cartridges. It was loaded by turning sideways a thumb lever under the barrel, pulling the barrel forward an inch or two and pushing it back after inserting the shell into the breech. This was the gun some of us older boys were allowed to use for killing stray cats and crows. Considering how irresponsibly we often handled the gun in that fairly crowded Khetwadi neighbourhood, it is fortunate and indeed surprising that no accident occurred. Hammerless guns and magazine rifles had not become popular, and the former were decried by the older and more conservative shikaris as positively dangerous since there were no visible hammers to tell you when they were ready to go off.

Arms licences to Indians, except to rajas, big zamindars and such like title-holding and proven loyalists, were very restricted. They were regarded as status symbols and there was much jockeying to get a licence. They were issued very sparingly, and only after a good deal of scrutinizing of character and the financial stability of the applicant, even though these were often acquired only for the purpose of 'display', which was one of the reasons printed on the official form, beside sport and self-defence! As a Justice of the Peace, Uncle Amir was entitled to keep any reasonable number of firearms free of licence or fee. Indian arms dealers were likewise few and restricted, the business being mostly in the hands of British concerns like Army & Navy Stores of Bombay and Calcutta, I. Hollis & Son (Bombay), R.B. Rodda & Co. and Manton & Son of Calcutta. All of these had JP's and the like on their mailing lists for catalogues of firearms and ammunition and shikar and camping requisites, such catalogues being issued every year before Christmas. I, along with some like-minded boy cousins, lay in wait for and devoured these catalogues avidly. We studied the specifications of each new gun and rifle in detail—the calibre, the muzzle velocity, the striking energy in foot/pounds, the powder of different types and weights of the various bullets, and so on, and, as a sort of window-shopping, there would be endless discussion and argument about the superiority of this or that make or action. We had many of the vital statistics of our favourites by heart and could reel them out freely for long periods afterwards. In later years in my own case the same sort

of infatuation was transferred to motorcycles and I enjoyed the exercise immensely.

The firearms I have myself possessed from time to time, commencing with 1917, were a BSA single-barrel .410 gun in Tavoy, with which I did most of my bird collecting and sport shooting in Burma and India till 1927. For my thirty-first birthday my wife Tehmina presented me with a double-barrel hammerless ejector 20-bore shot gun by Lincoln Jeffries. This gun has been my field companion ever since, now fifty-six years, and most of the several thousand birds collected during my regional bird surveys in the intervening years have been shot with this well beloved weapon, besides a good deal of shooting for sport. Of rifles, I had presented to me from his own armoury by my brother Hamid in 1918, a Winchester .351 calibre semi-automatic repeater. It was an excellent weapon for non-dangerous medium game but had the disconcerting tendency of jamming at unexpected moments—not often, it is true, but enough to make it not completely dependable in a tight corner. In 1922 I replaced this with a .423 (10.5 mm) Mauser bolt action magazine rifle, with which I did most of my big-game shooting in Tavoy (bison), and subsequently in India (two tigers, two panthers, several sloth bear, sambar, cheetal, nilgai, blackbuck, etc.). In 1927, after getting the Assistant Curator's job with the BNHS I added to my armoury a 6.5 (.256) Mannlicher-Schoenauer magazine carbine, a handy little weapon accurate and pleasurable to use. With a soft nose bullet it was effective enough against such tough customers as nilgai and sambar, while with nickel-coated solid bullets no more damage was done to specimens of large birds out of shot-gun range (cranes, raptors, etc.) than with a .22.

One truly remarkable piece of weaponry I acquired in exchange for my .32 calibre Colt automatic pistol during later years in Tavoy was a Mauser pistol of a model that was in use with the German cavalry in the First World War. It was rather a bulky weapon compared to a conventional pistol, with a barrel about 12 inches long. But attached to the wooden holster in which it was slung from the saddle or waist it could be aimed like an ordinary carbine and fired from the shoulder. It was

semi-automatic, with a 10-shot magazine, and sighted up to 1,000 metres. It was accurate and though perhaps less useful as a pistol for self-defence at close quarters, I found it very effective at ranges up to 150 or 200 yards. Back in Bombay my cousin, lifetime friend and one-time fellow shooting enthusiast Asaf Fyzee, presented me with his .366 (9.5 mm) Mauser magazine rifle, which was also a remarkably versatile weapon.

Among boys more or less my own age who used to flock together for games and other activities in the Khetwadi days—1909 or thereabouts—was a distant cousin, Iskandar Mirza, the story of whose sudden and fortuitous rise to power and then ignominious downfall in the first military takeover in Pakistan holds a moral and a warning for all upstarts of this genre. As a boy Iskandar was certainly very good company, resourceful and devil-may-care, and acknowledged leader in all the pranks to which we mischievous boys were prone. He was an enviable marksman with his 'Gem' air gun when we had our pigeon-shooting forays among the rooftops and garrets of the Khetwadi neighbourhood, better than average at most other games, and particularly good at cricket. In our schoolboy cricket matches, played on most Saturdays and Sundays in an open plot beside Sandhurst Road (not far from where Harkishandas Hospital now stands), I remember how Iskandar was always in great demand as a bowler for the special quirk he had of suddenly sneaking in a yorker which took the batsman off his guard and often his wicket as well. This same cunning device of sneaking in unexpected political yorkers seems to have served him in good stead in after life—for example while he was British Political Agent in the North West Frontier Provinces during the Khudai Khidmatgar movement of Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan. It won him many a troublesome wicket which was loudly applauded by his masters. May it have been one too many of these same political yorkers, delivered on a different field, that finally cost him his own wicket as President of Pakistan? Cricket is what originally brought Iskandar Mirza to the notice of Lord Willingdon, himself a reputed cricketer in his day. It was through the lord sahib's influence and patronage that he was selected among the first batch of Indians to be sent to

Sandhurst for training as King's Commissioned Officers in the Indian Army around 1924, an innovation stubbornly opposed by British diehards in India but grudgingly yielded to by the English parliament under mounting pressure from Indian nationalists.

3

Burma 1914-17

From the early bird-keeping days in Khetwadi I had dreamed of taking up zoology, particularly ornithology, as a profession when I grew up, and of becoming an intrepid explorer and big-game hunter—a respectable appellation in those days, and even somewhat of a status symbol. My reading, such as it was, consisted mostly of books about birds and general natural history, and about travel, exploration and shikar, particularly big-game hunting with all its thrills and derring-do. But in order to reach the stage at which formal biology began in the university curriculum in those days, one had to get through the Previous or First Year course following matriculation. After struggling hopelessly with logarithms and suchlike evils in the first few months at St Xavier's College it did not seem that I would ever be able to cross this formidable barrier. I was thoroughly miserable and scheming for some way of escape. Providentially, a rescue letter to Uncle Amiruddin from brother Jabir in Burma came just then. After obtaining a Cambridge diploma in Agriculture, Jabir had returned to India in August 1910 full of hope, but after trying unsuccessfully to get a job in the Agriculture Department—or some other suitable appointment—he had in desperation decided to join a cousin, Salah Tyabji, in business in Rangoon. Salah had recently acquired an interest in a wolfram mine in the Tavoy district of Tenasserim.

Tavoy had lately shot into prominence as a tin and wolfram mining centre and was attracting to itself adventurers and shady characters of the Gold Rush type. 'Mongrel, puppy,

whelp and hound and curs of low degree', they were all there, struggling, jostling and elbowing, not necessarily honestly, to get rich quick. Salah's business in Rangoon consisted chiefly of hardware and engineering stores for the flourishing rice and saw mills, and I remember his mainstay at the time was the selling agency for Burma of 'Gripoly' belting, 'leather-edged' as the advertisement boasted, which was then a popular brand. He was short-handed and had asked Jabir if he would care to come and join him in his Tavoy wolfram mining venture. Jabir, who was by this time pretty sick of unsuccessful job-hunting for a year or more, readily agreed, and his having done some geology at Cambridge was expected to be of help in the technology of mining. But Jabir's foremost love was agriculture and farming. He was sorely frustrated at not being able to find a congenial occupation, but decided to take up the Rangoon offer, hoping that in due course he would make and save up enough money to start farming on his own.

The wolfram mine in which Tyabji had a share with the concessionaire, a Burmese named Maung Lu Pe, was situated at Talaingya, a night's journey by sampan up the Tavoy river. Side by side with organizing and supervising the working of the mine, which necessitated frequent visits of several days at a time, Jabir had started a business in Tavoy town—the headquarters of the district and centre of the mining industry—in building material, mining tools and other articles in demand for the growing wolfram mining industry. The stock, consisting of sledge-hammers, picks and shovels, mining drill steel, corrugated iron, cement barrels, nails, coir ropes and suchlike dismal miscellanea, was stored and displayed on the ground floor of a house in Bazar Road near the central market, rented from one Maung E Cho—a Burmese Muslim (Zerbadi). The landlord, with his numerous and often noisily quarrelsome family, lived above. The front part of the ground floor served as the shop, the back part as our living quarters, which included an indoor open well for the water supply. I still remember the musty smelliness of this unlovely abode quite vividly, though it is now over sixty years ago.

Jabir was a born and incorrigible optimist, a man who had no

inhibition or false pride in putting his hand to any honest occupation, however incongruous or undignified it may seem to more 'sensitive' or snobbish natures. I have no doubt that it was the dream of the farm in the nebulous future and the compulsion to make it come true that impelled him into hardware shopkeeping. The prospects of achieving his purpose looked promising enough while the mining boom lasted, but it needed uncommon stubbornness of character for a man of his upbringing, education and intellectual background to weigh and wrap and exchange half a kilogram of iron nails or coir rope for a few annas—as the retail business often entailed.

It was under these circumstances that Jabir had written to Uncle Amiruddin suggesting that, unless I was particularly keen to pursue my college education, he could offer me a partnership in his newly-opened business if I was prepared to join him in Tavoy immediately. From childhood I had somehow held a low opinion of shopkeeping and shopkeepers, as distinct from business and businessmen, though I doubt whether I would have been able to define either. My ranking business within a higher category derived no doubt from the fact that many of my own revered elders happened to be businessmen, though by forgetting that their evolution to respectability from itinerant peddling was only through petty shopkeeping.

However, Jabir's letter arrived at the psychological moment when I was looking for a strategic escape from logarithms and higher algebra, and I was only too happy to bid goodbye to college education and prepare to launch myself in 'business'. That this might also mean the end of my dream of becoming a professional zoologist did not bother me at all, at least for the time being, so desperate had I become with college mathematics. All this happened in 1914 when I was about eighteen years old, and after I had struggled hopelessly for eight uneasy months with the university's first-year curriculum. I left for Rangoon via Calcutta in September 1914. The First World War had broken out a month before, and India had been dragged willy-nilly into it by our British masters, by illusory promises of self-government as a reward for loyalty to the King Emperor in his time of need. The legendary German cruiser *Emden* was

playing chivalrous pranks with shipping in the Bay of Bengal, saving passengers and sinking ships. Wireless telegraphy was in its infancy, radio had not appeared on the scene, and radar had not even been thought of. All this added vastly to the excitement of a sea voyage to Rangoon at that period, and fresh rumours and fantastic tales erupted every day of the near-magical exploits of the *Emden*—suddenly appearing at two or three far-flung places simultaneously and miraculously vanishing after doing her fell work—bombarding coastal towns, sinking ships after gallantly saving their human cargo. Such tales improved considerably in the telling and soon a store of the most unlikely legends gathered and snowballed round the *Emden*. At the same time it must be conceded that her commander, Capt. Schmidt, was a remarkably audacious, gallant and chivalrous enemy. Although the *Emden* was believed to be operating in the Bay of Bengal at the time of my crossing, and in spite of the alarmist rumours once or twice of suspicious ships being sighted from aboard, our passage was uneventful though unpleasantly rough, it still being the tail end of the monsoon. I saw the hand of the captain in these false alarms and excursions as a ploy to induct more serious attendance at the daily boat drills; it certainly worked.

The veteran B.I. (British India) mail steamer, which had been on the Calcutta-Rangoon run for over a generation, was boarded by a pilot at the mouth of the tidal Rangoon river, and we slid up it slowly, hooting steam launches, sampans and paddy barges out of the way, through a succession of corrugated iron-roofed rice and saw mills with enormous teak logs rafted down from the forest, lying sprawled helter-skelter and half buried in the squelchy mud at low tide along the banks, waiting to be hauled out by elephants for conversion.

The voyage from Calcutta, which took about forty hours, was a new adventure for me. My only experience of 'sea-faring' till then had been crossing Bombay harbour by steam ferry on occasional holiday visits to Kihim, and the experience of living, eating and sleeping on board was a novelty, albeit not a particularly memorable or luxurious one since I was travelling

'European deck'.* Sister Akhtar and brother-in-law Salah who received me at Tseekai Maung Taulay wharf had lately lost all their belongings in a fire which engulfed their rented bungalow, and were now living rather skimpily in a tiny makeshift flat in Brooking Street—a typical Anglo-Indian quarter—with one of their twin sons, Nadir, about one year old. His sibling Ahsan was being cared for in Baroda by his grandparents Abbas and Amina Tyabji, and only joined his parents in Rangoon two or three years later when they moved into a less cramped residence in a more respectable locality.

The little backwater town of Tavoy in Lower Burma was to be my domicile from 1914 to 1923, with an eventful break of some fifteen months back in Bombay (October 1917 to February 1919) which proved to be perhaps the most momentous period of my life and career. After a few days of acclimatization—or 'orientation' as is currently the more fashionable term—I sailed from Rangoon by an antiquated paddle steamship of the BISN Company—perhaps the last of its breed on this weekly Penang service—to the mouth of the Tavoy river for about twenty-four hours and thence upstream about two hours, by a smaller but more modern shallow draft steam launch, the *Yengyua*. We went through a maze of muddy tidal creeks lined on both banks with mangroves, *nepa* palms and wide stretches of paddy fields beyond. Until some years after the British occupation of Tenasserim in 1870 or thereabouts Tavoy was a criminal settlement like the Andamans, with a mixed lot of prisoners, chiefly Burmese, Chinese and Indian, many of whom married Burmese women and settled there after release from prison. Some had become reformed characters and respectable citizens while many continued to provide living evidence of their past history, creating a perfect setting for the scum of humanity—the crooks, scoundrels and charlatans that were to follow in the wake of the mining boom.

After the first few months of apprenticeship in hardware

* This was a space on the deck—chiefly in coastal steamers of the British India Steam Navigation Company—reserved for 'pore whites', 'eurasians' and others with westernized habits. Its fare was cheaper than that for First Class passengers, slightly more than ordinary deck fare.

shopkeeping, learning office routine, typewriting and other tricks of the trade under brother Jabir—senior partner in our newly established firm of J.A. Ali Bros. & Co. and an extremely conscientious worker and hard taskmaster—I felt freer, especially on weekends, to move around and explore the surrounding countryside. Jabir had a handsome white pony which I frequently rode out three or four miles after the shop closed on Saturday afternoons, to various rubber estates and fruit gardens of friends where enjoyable and rewarding birding could usually be had. At that time I possessed no binoculars, but as the eyes were young and my birdwatching rather diletante, that was not such a serious handicap. In those early greenhorn days I was even less familiar with the commoner Burmese birds than with Indian. Their identification was a knotty problem since none of the people around could help, and the only reference book I possessed was Murray's *Birds of India*—an inept publication made more inept by the lack of proper illustrations. However, learning the hard way is fun, and, in spite of the inherent frustrations, far more satisfying and enduring in the end. The richness and diversity of the animal life, especially birds, in the forests of Tavoy district, was fascinating, much of it of course new to me, and I started making a small reference collection of my own. The abundance of woodpecker species was particularly striking, one of the first to catch my eye being the Black-and-Buff (*Meiglyptes jugularis*), so similar in 'jizz' to our Heartspotted (*Hemicircus canente*) and yet so different. The multicoloured Broadbills were also an exciting novelty. But my best remembered excitement was the first sighting of the Whitewinged Black Jay (*Platysmurus leucopterus*), quite different from anything I knew in India. It is strange how some insignificant trifles stick in one's memory: to this day I can vividly recall in minute detail the exact location, the tree, the branch and the stance in which that bird sat sixty years ago.

I had casually discovered a good samaritan and helpful mentor in J.C. Hopwood of the then Imperial Forest Service, the Divisional Forest Officer at the time. Hopwood was very knowledgeable about Burmese birds and was himself busy

collecting specimens and nests and eggs of birds of this area for Stuart Baker, then working on the second edition of the *Fauna of British India—Birds*. I was in occasional correspondence with Charles M. Inglis, a tea and indigo planter of Bihar, an authority on Indian birds, particularly of the north-east region. I frequently exchanged notes and specimens with Inglis. Some of my Tavoy specimens are probably still in the Inglis collection which was widely dispersed after his death in 1954, a large part of it being purchased by Dr Dillon Ripley for the Yale University Zoological Museum when he was Professor of Zoology there. However, during my first innings in Burma, between 1914 and 1917, and till I resumed in 1919 after doing the formal zoology course, my birding activity remained rather sporadic and dilettante.

In addition to retailing hardware and machinery, and mining for tin and wolfram, J.A. Ali Bros.'s business consisted in purchasing small lots of the ore and smoked raw rubber sheets from small hand-to-mouth producers and building up stocks for sale to larger operators. In a fluctuating wartime market the last was often a somewhat speculative undertaking.

In November 1915 I was left in sole charge of the Tavoy business for two or three months while Jabir was away in India getting married. Before he left for Bombay, and in preparation for receiving his bride and setting up a home, we had shifted from the dingy back part of the shop in Bazar Road to a rented single-storeyed wooden-walled and shingle-roofed house in a pleasanter locality on the fringe of the town. Although it lacked a compound and had its entrance directly from the street, it overlooked extensive paddy fields with wooded hills on the distant horizon and was a welcome change indeed from our previous musty 'stable'. When sister-in-law Safia (née Badruddin Tyabji Sr.) came, the womanly touch soon transformed it into a snug and comfortable abode. My wife Tehmina and I continued to live happily in this place till after Jabir and his wife left Tavoy for good in 1921 to establish a branch of the hardware business in Rangoon in partnership with our would-be financier, Osman Mustikhan & Co., a well-established firm of Baluchi P.W.D. contractors. (This step had become necessary

in order to offset the declining prospects of the hardware trade in Tavoy since the slump in the mining industry).

Soon after returning to Tavoy with his bride, Jabir left again on a business trip to Britain, accompanied by his wife and one of our newly acquired partners, to establish business contacts for the Rangoon branch in Europe and the USA. Jabir was accompanied by young Yusuf Khan, the pleasantest, most educated and rational brother of the Mustikhan trio, who was to be directly associated with us in the Rangoon business. As kismet would dispose, within a few days of their arrival in London Yusuf Khan suffered a fatal heart attack, completely upsetting all their plans, and Jabir returned to Rangoon with little achieved. With Yusuf Khan gone the Mustikhan brothers lost heart and interest in the hardware partnership, which really never did get off the ground. Jabir found the brothers uncooperative and difficult to deal with, and, after a year or so of trial and frustration, gave up. He retreated to India in 1923 and got back once more to his agricultural dream, which, through unflagging optimism, dogged determination and relentless self-flogging, he did—all honour to him—finally manage to bring true.

A couple of years after Jabir and Safia had left Tavoy to settle in Rangoon my wife and I found and moved into a pleasant and more comfortable cottage with a large compound and some shady cashew trees, in a more 'genteel' locality known as the Civil Lines on the outskirts of the town. The cottage was pretty and well designed, but of a semi *pukka* nature, raised off the ground on posts to fight the damp, with the walls of asbestos-cement sheets and roof wooden-shingled. Full advantage was taken by Tehmina of the opportunities here for kitchen-gardening and poultry-keeping on a domestic scale, and we were soon enjoying our own roast duck with tender home-grown green peas! We also had opportunities for raising a few Burmese Silver Pheasants from wild collected eggs, and nursing from babyhood such other interesting pets as a Leopard Cat (*Felis bengalensis*), a Tree Shrew (*Tupaia glis*), a Flying Lemur (*Galleopithecus volans*) and a Great Pied Hornbill (*Buceros bicornis*), in addition to the lady-dog 'Gyp' and the gentleman

pie, 'General Dyer', named after the 'hero' of Jallianwala Bagh, whose behaviour towards his fellow pets was singularly evocative of the original. Brother Hamid (on furlough) and his wife Sharifa spent a delightful week with us at this cottage, and Tehmina returned with them to Rangoon en route to Bombay for good, since after the collapse of the timber venture we had decided to close down the business in Tavoy. It was the practice of BISON Co. to announce in the Rangoon dailies the names of the first-class passengers on their mail boats to Calcutta, and I was much amused to find in the passenger list one morning a 'Mr Hamid Ali and 3 Mrs Alis', which must surely have convinced doubters that here was a true Muslim! It seems that for the voyage Sharifa and Tehmina had been joined by Jabir's wife, Safia, thus making up the covey.

Till our affairs could be wound up I moved into the Tavoy Asian Club premises, whose ownership had unsolicitedly fallen round my neck on my clearing its hypothecation to the bank. For some time, and till finally leaving Tavoy, I was the Secretary of the Tavoy Athletic Association—actually an internationally made up football club—started by a few of us some years before. One of the most enthusiastic players in the team I had assembled was a friendly, totally untypical and eccentric ICS Englishman, F.W. Scott, the Sessions Judge of Tenasserim division at the time. He was a fanatical self-appointed guardian of the football field against encroaching pedestrians, mostly milk vendors short-cutting across the turf who were liable to be furiously chased and manhandled by Scott if caught. One morning, before the court sitting, he rushed almost breathless into my living room to inquire the cost of ten seers of milk. In spite of being familiar with his eccentricities I couldn't make out what this was all about. It seems that, driving past the football ground on his way to work, Scott had seen a milkman taking a short-cut through the field with a pail in his hand. He had stopped the car suddenly, jumped out and given chase. The man had dropped his bucket in terror and fled for life, whereupon Scott had emptied the milk on the ground; he now wanted to compensate the man! Another time, on his way home after the court had risen, Scott barged into my room

looking pale, nervous and thoroughly miserable, and flopped into an easy chair to relax. He was almost shivering with emotion and explained that he had just sentenced a Burmese dacoit to be hung for murder. Before being taken away by the police the man was asked if he had any last wish to make. The murderer, who seemed completely unshaken by the sentence, replied quite coolly that he would like to eat a durian! The contrast in the reactions of the sentencer and sentencee, he said, was a revealing commentary on human nature.

4

Interlude at Bombay and Marriage

Having thrust myself into business at the early age of eighteen with my formal education incomplete and without any sort of training or natural aptitude for the job, I began to realize after a couple of years how unsatisfactory the situation was. My home leave was due towards the end of 1917 and in consultation with the Senior it was decided that I should prolong my leave in Bombay to undergo a year's formal course in Commercial Law and Accountancy at Davar's College of Commerce. This decision proved an indirect blessing in disguise, because with the considerate goading and encouragement of Reverend Father Blatter, Director of the Biology Department at St Xavier's College, who had soon discovered where my true interest lay, I was able in the same year to complete the B.Sc. (in those days B.A. Honours) course in Zoology under the stimulating tutelage of Professor Jal P. Mullan—a remarkable man and admirable teacher who remained a valued friend till his death in about 1953.

My introduction to a formal zoology curriculum at St Xavier's came through a slim textbook of the crammer sort entitled *Animal Types for College Students*. It opened with a thundering broadside which could have laid low for all time a greater enthusiasm for biology than mine, were it not that the author himself was initiating us in the course. The opening sentence of the very first chapter, on the Amoeba, ran (how well I remember it!): 'The Amoeba or "*Proteus Animalcule*" is a Protozoon belonging to the Order Lobosa which includes simple forms with blunt pseudopodia which do not anastomose.'

Wonderful news! It is to the credit of Professor Mullan that in spite of this terrifying barrage he succeeded so well not only in sustaining my interest in biology but in fanning it till it grew to a lasting and radiant flame. Mullan was a quiet man, an exceedingly keen observer of human nature with a dry humour and sound common sense, an incisive commentator on men and matters.

The daily schedule of attendance at Davar's was from eight to ten o'clock in the morning, which left just enough time to pick up Stanley Prater from his miniature terrace flat at Elphinstone Circle on the pillion of my little Douglas and dash off to St Xavier's before the zoology class began. Prater, an Anglo-Indian, had joined the BNHS as a callow youth just out of school as a 'bottlewasher' ten years or so before, and had shown great promise during his apprenticeship as museum assistant and field collector under the Society's first stipendiary curator, N.B. Kinnear. I had corresponded with Prater fairly regularly from Tavoy on natural history matters, chiefly birds, in course of time spilling over to other matters of wide common interest. Close friendship and understanding had developed between us, which continued to grow during the many years of subsequent personal contact we were destined to be colleagues in the Society. But before his claim for consideration as a scientific member of the staff could be entertained, the Society's Executive Committee had required him to undergo a formal course in biology under Father Blatter.

My admiration and regard for Prater's intellectual versatility was profound. Though perhaps he cannot claim any *original* contribution to science, he read voraciously and managed to keep himself abreast of all the latest developments in natural history. Apart from possessing a remarkably retentive memory, he had a gift for digesting complicated technicalities and reducing pedantic professional jargon into simple language a layman could understand. Indeed this was Prater's forte—the popularization of zoological knowledge. Most of his writings bear witness to his mastery of the art. He wrote in a pleasing and often humorous style. For our zoology practicals at St Xavier's we had to work in pairs, and I well remember how

convenient it was for me to use him as the working partner whenever unsavoury jobs, such as dissecting a cockroach, had to be performed.

It was a sincere regret to me—and later I suspect also to himself—that with Independence Prater allowed himself to be virtually stampeded to emigrate out of India by an irrationally panicked wife and doubting Anglo-Indian friends. I have a conviction that he never really felt at home in England, having being born and having spent the major part of his life in India. In unguarded moments one could sense his longing to be back among the people and surroundings with which he was more familiar, but having burnt his boats his pride obliged him to keep up the facade of being happy in exile. It depressed me beyond words to visit him in his London home a few years before he died. I found him a partly paralysed cripple in bed, all alone with a radio by his side to allay boredom. His wife and daughter were away at their respective wage-earning jobs, with no servant or any other person within call to attend to his wants or to talk to all day, except for a kindly old lady tenant upstairs who peeped in occasionally to see that all was well. To one of Prater's dynamic temperament and alertness, physical as well as mental, and accustomed in his native environment to servants at beck and call all hours of the day, I can well imagine how galling it must all have been.

After the zoology class at St Xavier's we would rush back to the Society's rooms, which in those days and up to 1953 were in the premises of Phipson & Co., Wine Merchants. I spent many hours several times a week in the library or rummaging among the bird collection to familiarize myself with Indian birds and in trying to identify with the help of Prater or Kinnear some of the species that had puzzled me in Tenasserim.

By lucky coincidence I found that another fellow-student in the zoology class was my distant cousin, a childhood and lifelong friend, Asaf Ali Asghar Fyzee, popularly known as AAA, a brilliant intellect and habitual winner of prizes throughout his career, who, to my sorrow and disappointment, forsook biology after securing a First Class Hons. degree in favour of law at Cambridge. Here, as was to be expected, he

likewise won a number of coveted scholarships and distinctions. Asaf was, besides, an excellent all-round sportsman. In his younger days he was more than ordinarily good with shot-gun and rifle and played tennis and cricket for his college, St John's, at Cambridge, being at one time captain of the college tennis team and proving thus a worthy disciple of his well known uncles, Azhar and Athar, the 'Fyzee brothers' of international tennis fame. Asaf distinguished himself as an Arabic scholar and prizeman at Cambridge, and thereafter also in real life. The mastery of Arabic enabled him to go direct to the grassroot sources of Muhammadan law, especially that of the Ismailis, and to interpret it critically and rationally. He has published a number of books on the subject, some of which have been prescribed as manuals by universities in India and abroad, and which have received wide acclaim in Muslim countries. It is tragic that a career of such outstanding brilliance and versatility should have got so clogged in later life by family misfortunes which turned him into something of a recluse and a misanthrope.

Back in Bombay, September 1917, I lived with my eldest sister Ashraf-unnissa—Ashraf for short—and brother-in-law Shums, the shikari-solicitor, in their Khetwadi flat above the stable, the venue of my boyhood sparrow hunts. This was an annexe of the old Amir Manzil belonging to uncle Amiruddin Tyabji who had died in February 1917 while I was still in Burma, after which the property was dismembered and sold. Unbeknown to me, Ashraf and my younger sister Kamoo had, in secret collusion, been scheming, like all loving sisters, to get me engaged to an attractive relation who had taken their fancy and evidently charmed them off their feet. In their letters to me in Tavoy, and in personal conversation later, this apparition was being subtly brought in somewhat oftener than the occasion would seem to demand, though I thought I had made it sufficiently clear that at that point of time I was not interested in women at all. Tehmina and I, it seems, had been together as kindergarten pupils in the ZBMM Girls High School at Girgaum in 1904 or 1905, before her father, C.A. Latif, migrated to London with his family to extend his pearl business to Europe. I did not remember the little girl at all till shown an ancient

group photograph of the school, years later. After passing her London matric from a somewhat élite boarding school in Surrey, Tehmina was discouraged by her father from continuing at a university, and instead she was entered into a Finishing School for young ladies to learn the correct socialite airs and graces. Tehmina often described with much amusement the inanity of some of the tenets of genteel behaviour taught there. For example, one which I remember was that before you stirred a pot of weak tea at a party you had always to say 'excuse me' to the company with a sweetly apologetic smile. The Latif family repatriated itself to India in 1915, as World War I was hotting up over London and there seemed little likelihood of an early end, and settled in an elegant rented flat in Adenwala Mansion at Chowpati, before their own building, 'Latifia', just across the way in Harvey Road, was completed. My sisters artfully contrived a supposedly impromptu meeting between us at this flat, and in due course the train of events followed according to their plan. At first I was rather nervous as to how a girl brought up and educated abroad in an entirely different milieu and used to the sophisticated amenities of life would respond to the prospect of a rough-and-ready existence in a backwater like Tavoy, with its primitive conditions and practically no entertainments or social life.

Kamoo and Tehmina had taken to each other from their very first meeting after the latter's return from Britain, and remained the closest of friends even after Kamoo's marriage to cousin Hassan F. Ali in 1918 and their departure to settle in Japan, right up to Tehmina's death in July 1939. It was evident that Kamoo had started the preparatory softening process well in advance of my coming from Burma, because Tehmina seemed to know a great many things about me that I would not otherwise have expected. On closer acquaintance with Tehmina I was relieved to find that her tastes and interests and likes and dislikes were almost identical with my own. Despite her sophisticated upbringing and background she remained a country girl at heart. Luckily the finishing school had not finished her completely. Like me she was ever happy to escape boring social parties, specially of society ladies and small talk.

She liked informal friendly company in small doses and people of kindred interests and outlook. Tehmina also despised hypocrisy, cant, and pomposity, and could stomach no ostentation. She loved the wooded countryside and jungle walks, good books and poetry, both Urdu and English, and flowers and gardening, and later, during my ornithological surveys, she became seriously interested in birds. In short, most of our interests overlapped as much as one could wish, a discovery that gave me a little more confidence about the future. Later, while we were living in Dehra Dun, we had frequent opportunities to attend good *mushairas*. Tehmina, with her alien background, felt a pang of regret at missing all the fun and took up the study of Urdu with ferocious dedication, aided and abetted by a professional *munshi* and a good two-way dictionary. She soon developed a passion for the language, specially for Urdu poetry, and spent many hours of her spare time each day, at home and in camp, with her favourite *intekhab*s (anthologies) and the Urdu-English dictionary ever at the ready.

It was lucky for me as much as for Tehmina herself that, thanks to her lively temperament and friendly disposition, she was so well loved by all my sisters and brothers and got on so well with the family. Kamoo and Farhat were her special favourites, and I feel she was never so relaxed and happy as when living in their company. Farhat, my second-oldest sister, who in turn had grown particularly fond of Tehmina, was two years younger than Ashraf, and the fourth in the family series. She had finished with her elementary English education at the ZBMM Girls School long before I joined, and thereafter had shared with aunt Hamida Begam some of the housework and responsibilities of the Khetwadi establishment, as well as her care for the developing family brood. Farhat was in fact a surrogate mother to me: she gave me my first lessons in Urdu as a child and remained in many ways my favourite sister till her end in 1982. Being the 'baby' of the family I could wheedle many special privileges and concessions denied to the older children, and was not slow to take undue advantage of her indulgent mollicoddling whenever possible. She was gentle and cheerful by nature, possessed a lively sense of humour,

and, like Hamid, had an amazing knack of creating enduring friendships at all levels, which made her remembered even by casual acquaintances ever after. In 1911 she married Shuja-uddin (Shujoobhai to us), a younger brother of Shums, the shikari-solicitor, who was the eldest son of uncle Abbas (Tyabji).^{*} I recall her delightful house visits to us—first at Kihim and Kotagiri while I was marking time for the assignments in Hyderabad and Kerala, and then at Dehra Dun at the time we were living there—and how immensely we enjoyed her cheerful presence and witty conversation, and her reading aloud to us *Musaddas-e-Hali*, Ghalib and Iqbal, and some of Premchand's well-known novels. In later years Tehmina and I spent several happy weeks at a time holidaying with Farhat and Shuja in the various back-of-beyond Hyderabad districts where Shuja was posted as a revenue officer in the Nizam's service, and then again in their delightful home at Daulatabad after his retirement.

Harking back to the time I got engaged to Tehmina, I am reminded of that telegram which, by the perfection of its mutilation, was for me more embarrassing than funny under the particular circumstances. Many may recall the murderous epidemic of influenza that swept across the continents in 1918 and carried off in a few short weeks many times more lives than the total killed in the four years of World War I immediately preceding it. I happened to be in Bombay then, doing my training in commerce and zoology. Tehmina's elder brother, Hassan Latif, was a district engineer in the Nizam's service, and news came through that his entire household, including his wife, several children and servants, were down with the fever with none at home to attend to them. Being newly engaged to the sister in the face of a mild domestic reservation and anxious to cut a dash with the family, I gallantly offered to go to Hyderabad and help with the nursing. No wonder Hassan felt somewhat alarmed, on receiving the telegram, at my beginning to scrounge on inlaws-to-be so early in the day! Actually the telegram which had left me as SHALL I COME AND HELP

^{*} Three of uncle Abbas's sons married three of my sisters, thus almost cornering the market, as it were: Shums—Ashraf, Shuja—Farhat, and Salah—Akhtar.

had read on arrival at its destination as SMALL INCOME SEND HELP. This is the most perfect example of telegraphic mutilation I know of and deserves to be immortalized.

We got married in December 1918. Though I was only twenty-two at the time and perhaps rather young to marry, I was persuaded to do so since there was no knowing how soon I would be able to return to India next. In the event it proved just as well I didn't put it off, because economic conditions for our business worsened steadily with the end of the war and would have remained impossible for me until many years later. Brother Aamir, four years my senior, had also married the charming and accomplished Leila Hydari a year earlier, and, getting disenchanted with the Nizam's Police Service, had decided to try his luck in business as one of the bros. in J.A. Ali Bros. & Co. He decided to leave his young wife behind with her parents at Hyderabad as she was then expecting a baby. Aamir was tragically destined never to see her again. He died in Burma a few months later in unfortunate and strange circumstances which I shall recount later. However, in January 1919, unaware of what the future held, Aamir sailed along with newly-married us from Calcutta to Rangoon.

5

Memories of Burma

The popularity of the diminutive couple, sister Akhtar and Salah Tyabji, particularly with the Indian community in Rangoon, was amazing. It extended not only to what may be called high society—professional men like lawyers and doctors and the top brass of government officials, High Court judges and the like—but also to those of humbler status, down to rickshaw-pullers and hack *tikka gharry* drivers. Their popularity was sustained and continued to grow during the thirty-five years or so they lived in Burma, and at one stage or another Salah was President or Secretary of the various labour and political unions, leader of the Indian National Congress in Burma, representative of the Indian community in the pre-Independence diarchical Burmese Legislative Council, and a thorn in the side of the colonial administration. Akhtar was the moving spirit in the education of girls, specially Muslim, domiciled Indian and Zerbadi. When the Japanese overran Burma in 1942, Salah and his son Nadir (later Captain N.S. Tyabji, I.N.) played an outstanding and heroic role in the evacuation of Indian nationals from Burma along the murderous overland route through Nagaland with superhuman courage and physical exertion. As the cumulative result of all this and the black-water fever he had contracted on the disastrous trek, Salah collapsed upon reaching Mussoorie and for several days teetered alarmingly on the brink under the hospitable roof of 'Southwood', the home of Hamid and Sharifa. The circle of their friends and acquaintances was remarkable. Almost every Indian of consequence and many without, who had resided in Burma,

specially Rangoon, during the period, or who merely happened to pass through, was familiar with the Tyabjis. They kept open house, entertained freely, and were ready to help everyone in any sort of trouble and in every way they could. Indeed it is astonishing how well and affectionately they are remembered by the older generation of expatriates even thirty-five years after they left Burma. There are few 'refugees' who have not at one time or another come across one or both of this remarkable couple and who do not recall some little kindness or friendly gesture from them.

My introduction to Big Game really came in Burma after the diversification of our declining wolfram mining business on the ending of World War I into leasing government forests for exploitation for sleeper supply to the Indian railways. The species in greatest demand for railway sleepers was the hardwood known in Burma as Pyinkado (*Xylia dolabriformis*). Within the magnificent moist-deciduous forests in the upper reaches of the Tavoy river, in the Natkyzin and Heinze basin areas where this species occurred in workable quantities, large tracts had to be surveyed from the viewpoint of availability, gregariousness, extraction and the transport facilities of logs to depots and saw pits, and of shipment of sleepers to India. The lack of roads and communications in this remote and undeveloped area proved a serious bottleneck. The difficulties of shipping the product in specially chartered tramps and auxiliary-engined junks (dhows) from out-of-the-way places without proper docking or loading facilities ultimately forced the abandonment of the timber venture. On paper, and on the irrepressible optimism of my partner, it had seemed a maker of our fortunes. This enterprise, known as Tavoy Timbers, was started in partnership with a Parsi friend, Jamshedji Manekji of Rangoon, an extraordinarily energetic and resourceful individual, but given to wild over-optimism in all circumstances—a weakness that had originally sucked him into the vortex of the short-lived tin and wolfram mining boom in Tavoy a few years earlier. Financially our timber concern never really got off the ground as a business, but in other ways, for me personally, it proved highly congenial and rewarding from the sport and

natural history angle. It gave me excellent opportunities for visiting remote and undisturbed forest areas and of camping out in the wilds for several days at a time in sequestered forest bungalows, sometimes sharing isolated huts of the Karen 'taungya' (shifting cultivation) cultivators for night halts, thanks to their friendly contacts with my Karen guide. A cheerful Madrasi cook-bearer carried the 'Icmic' cooker in action, with a hot meal available from it on tap. The bedding was carried in a rucksack on my back and the trusty Mauser slung across my shoulder. The ration of rice and *dal* in bags and miscellaneous extras travelled on a hired camp follower. The guide, U Kyan Tha, a christianized Karen, was an elephant owner as well as our dragging contractor for logs from the forests to the saw pits. His intimate familiarity with the terrain proved invaluable in the prospecting for eligible forest blocks. Moreover, U Kyan Tha was an excellent and knowledgeable jungle man and a veteran hunter to boot. He was inseparable from his rusty Belgian-made 12-bore single-barrelled gun, with which he claimed to regularly kill sambar, barking deer, pig and even gaur. He claimed also to have shot a tiger with it, and a rhinoceros, and once to have destroyed a rogue elephant. 'Let the credit rest with the relater', as the Emperor Babur would say, but U Kyan Tha was certainly quite knowledgeable about his native wildlife and trees in general, and I learnt a good deal of the local jungle and folk-lore from him. He knew all the swamps in the Heinze basin area that were frequented by the then (1922) fast-vanishing Lesser Onehorned Rhinoceros (*Rhinoceros sondaicus*), an animal I was specially keen to see and photograph if possible. He guided me to several of its typical haunts but unfortunately we never came across the beast, although in one swamp a recent wallow and fresh spoor did provide positive proof of its existence. A short while before, the colonial government of Burma had imposed a total ban on the killing of rhinoceros, but, as elsewhere, poaching by horn hunters was continuing and by now the species has probably vanished.

Looking at the Heinze basin on the map of Lower Burma today brings back nostalgic memories of those uncomfortable

yet exhilarating nomadic days in the jungle. And at this distance of time, when one has forgotten the mosquitoes and the leeches, the constant monsoon drenchings all day and the wet, soggy bedding all night, they even seem romantic. In any case it was all very good fun sixty years ago.

The story of the Burma epoch would be incomplete without the introduction of a rather curious and enigmatic character who fortuitously breezed into my life and affairs during the early and more optimistic mining days. Bert Ribbentrop, who had himself drifted to Tavoy with the flotsam on the wave-crest of the mining boom, was an inexplicable and in some ways remarkable, even admirable, character. But though I was closely associated with him for over three years during our disastrous mining partnership, often spending three or four days at a time together in his primitive raised-on-poles palm-leaf and bamboo hut at our Mechoung concession, I was able to discover precious little about his life-history and antecedents. He was a son of Mr Berthold Ribbentrop, C.I.E., one of the forestry experts imported from Germany by the British Indian government in 1866 on the advice of Sir Dietrich Brandis, to organize scientific forestry in India and establish the Provincial Forest Service. Bert talked a good deal about Simla, where his father had spent the last few years till his retirement in 1900 as Inspector-General, and of many of his father's contemporaries in government services. However, I never learnt if he himself was born in India or had spent any part of his childhood in this country. He never mentioned his mother, whether she was German or not, nor anything about her—and only in passing did he refer to a sister living in London with whom he seemed to be on affectionate terms. I gathered he also had a wife living in London, from whom he was either estranged or divorced, and a daughter. He spoke very little indeed about his private life and connections, and to my knowledge he certainly never wrote to or received any letters from his relations during the years I knew him; neither did he ever express a longing to go back home to England; nor did he receive from or send home any remittances during that period. The latter is easily understandable because the poor man never had anything to send.

I often wondered how he himself managed to survive, considering that the Mechuong mine hardly ever showed any profit despite Bert's unflagging and perhaps baseless optimism. I suppose it is possible to exist at least for some time on an unvarying diet of *dal* and rice if generously spiced with optimism and hope. Bert was a congenital optimist but the basis of his optimism was hard to detect; the output of the mine certainly never justified it.

After three years of the mining partnership, when I 'retired hurt' from Burma—a thoroughly disillusioned but wiser businessman—leaving Ribbentrop as the sole 'beneficiary' of the mining enterprise, he was still struggling heroically with undiminished hope and faith, but now interspersed with unaccustomed fits of deep despondency. A few months afterwards I heard the pathetic news that in one of these fits of depression Bert had removed himself to spend the night in an unfrequented dak bungalow and there shot himself with a pistol. This was the disastrous culmination of my mining venture and also that of one who, true to the traditions of the mining profession, must surely rank among the world's most unbending optimists. Ribbentrop had received his mining engineer's training at the University of Freiburg in Germany and had put in a few years gold mining in British Guiana, apparently with no better luck. He was inducted into tin and wolfram mining in Tavoy by a friend of his, J. W. Donaldson-Aiken, who owned a rubber estate up the river at Egane and a wolfram mine at Pagaye—afterwards sold to Burma Finance and Mining Co. Ltd. Ribbentrop was a happy-go-lucky, kind and friendly individual, well liked by the mine labourers and villagers who often came to him for help and advice in their domestic and official troubles and scrapes. Among his many lines of versatility, one, oddly enough, was his competence as an amateur midwife. He had acquired a reputation in the surrounding countryside and was in great demand, prospective fathers coming to call him from long distances in the jungle and from outlying villages, sometimes in the middle of the night. He kept at hand a Gladstone bag with all the medical and even surgical requisites ready, and I never knew him refuse to attend

a call, however inconvenient the hour. In return his patients occasionally brought him bananas or freshly caught fish, or eggs or chickens, but these were all grateful voluntary offerings, for his services were all gratis.

The name Ribbentrop is apparently uncommon in Germany. Thus, in later years (c. 1937), when one of that name became Hitler's ambassador in London, I was rather intrigued and asked my ornithologist friend, Colonel R. Meinertzhagen, who knew the ambassador personally, to find out if he was connected in any way with the once Inspector-General of Forests in India. At the next opportunity Colonel Meinertzhagen tackled von Ribbentrop on this and wrote to me as follows: (London, 16.12.38) 'I remember your telling me of your Ribbentrop and I asked, but our VON (and the VON is a lie) denied all connection with commerce (he would, being a super snob and one of the worst men in Germany) or ever having had a connection with the timber trade.'

6

 Bombay 1924–9

On the retreat from Burma in 1924, Tehmina and I lived for a while with my sister Kamoo and brother-in-law Hassan, who had kindly offered to let us be nominal paying guests in their spacious, newly-built bungalow on Pali Hill in Bombay. Hassan had done well in business in Kobe, Japan, as Manager of Samuel, Samuel & Co.'s Indian department, but was keen to return and settle down in India. Here he went into partnership with an old school friend, Rattanchand Talakchand Master, a flourishing share and bullion broker, but the partnership was short-lived as Rattanchand turned out to be a reckless speculator who soon came to grief and insolvency. After trying his hand unsuccessfully at share brokering on his own, Hassan decided to return to Japan, leaving Kamoo and three children—Saad, Laeeq and Aamir (born 1923)—to follow when he had found his feet again. The Pali Hill bungalow was to be let thereafter to the manager of Burmah Shell. Pali Hill and the area around its base, from the fishing village of Danda eastward—Khar, Vile Parle, Santa Cruz, etc. and south to Bandra were paddy fields interspersed with large mango and tamarind trees and palmyra (*Borassus*) palms. Most of Pali Hill, including the golf links up to Danda, was the private property of Mulraj Khatau. It was an extensive grove of grafted mango trees, mostly alphonso and pairi. Plots were sold for residential bungalows chiefly, and preferably to Europeans, and on the whole the locality was more or less an exclusively European preserve. The bungalows were of attractive single-storeyed, colonial-type architecture, with tiled roofs, and mostly

surrounded by well-kept lawns and flower beds. In fact there was a municipal ruling up to the time of Independence and later that two-thirds of every plot was to be maintained as open space and only one-third could be built upon. At that time there were no pukka roads, no electricity, no municipal sanitation, and only a restricted and undependable water supply. The most important landmark of the locality was the Petit Parsi Orphanage—now the Avabai Petit Girls High School. Happily, the place had not then been discovered by movie stars.

The hill slope from the golf links and up Carter Road, from where the bottom paddy fields and golf links ended, was well wooded—shrubbery of *karwanda*, *ber*, *babul* and wild date, with large shady trees of *imli* (tamarind), banyan and others characteristic of the South Konkan landscape. It was an excellent venue for birding and it was while living on Pali Hill in 1924 that I did most of the collecting and study for a paper I hoped to produce titled 'Birds of Bombay and Salsette', as a pendant to Prater's very useful *Snakes of Bombay and Salsette*, which had recently been published by the Society. The paper on birds was actually published in the Society's journal many years later, jointly with Humayun Abdulali, who had also gathered a lot of additional material while doing zoology at St Xavier's College for his B.A. degree, with encouragement from Father Palacios, a Spanish Jesuit who was then Director of Biology in the College. Commuting to office between Bandra and Churchgate was done by steam-engined trains. Cars were few and the roads dusty and untarred. The first local electric trains started at about this time. There were frequent interruptions and stoppages due to short-circuiting caused by the iron wire in crows' nests built in overhead brackets, until a special crow-proof bracket was designed. Besides the Pali Hill area, most of my bird collecting in Salsette was done in the well-wooded areas around Powai, Tulsi and Vihar lakes, the Trombay hills, Mulund, Vikhroli, Bhandup, Ghodbunder, Bhyndar, etc. On Sundays and holidays, Prater, McCann and Jacobs (Secretary of the Prince of Wales Museum) often took part in these collecting forays and many unexpected species figured in the collection, such as the Malabar Trogon and the

Three-toed Forest Kingfisher—two that I remember vividly. The Mulund hills backdropping the present Godrej complex at Vikhroli were densely forested and the entire catchment area of the lakes and all that is now Aarey Milk Colony and Borivli National Park was one continuous stretch of fairly thick jungle and palmyra palms. Pig and barking deer were common, and also sambar. Panthers frequently strayed in, and the last stray tiger was shot in 1929 near Vihar Lake.

After Kamoo and the children left for Japan and the Pali bungalow was let, we moved over to Tehmina's father, C.A. Latif, in the top flat of his apartment building, 'Latifia', on Harvey Road behind Wilson College at Chowpati. Tehmina soon got a part-time job as Secretary of the Bombay Presidency Women's Council with its office in the south wing of the Town Hall. A post of ornithologist was advertised by the Zoological Survey of India at that time, for which I applied with Father Blatter, Dr Stresemann and the BNHS as my referees, but, having no university degree, stood little chance against M.Sc.s and Ph.D.s. This post actually went to M.L. Roonwal, who retired in 1965 as Director of the Zoological Survey of India, having succeeded Sundar Lal Hora. I felt greatly dejected at the time because it seemed unlikely that there would soon be another opening for an ornithologist elsewhere in India. My advice to all young aspirants for government jobs is: never fail to arm yourself with a university degree, for whatever it is worth. However, in retrospect I feel it was the luckiest thing that could have happened to me as it saved me from ending up as a fossilized bureaucrat.

One elderly Mrs Dracup had been an Inspectress of Schools in Bombay Presidency and had become friendly with Kamoo when Kamoo was teaching in the Parsi Girls' School in Broach (1917). After retirement Mrs Dracup was living with her son, a Secretary to the Government of Bombay around 1925/6, in the charming English villa-type bungalow built as a model dwelling for the proposed 'Garden City' of the Bombay Development Committee at Chembur—a plan which was later given up. Mrs Dracup invited us (Tehmina's father Camruddin Latif, Tehmina and myself) to tea one day to have a look at the

bungalow which the government was trying to dispose of, and which Uncle Camruddin was interested in buying for Tehmina. The idea was to give up the Chowpati flat and live in the suburbs, where we could have a garden and grow our own vegetables and flowers, for which Tehmina was pining, as was I for the open countryside and birding rambles.

The bungalow was charmingly situated and designed and beautifully kept, and surrounded by greenery and well laid-out lawns. All three of us fell for it immediately. So much so that Uncle Camruddin—a very shrewd and cool-headed businessman—started negotiations with the government for its purchase the very next day and offers and counter-offers were in progress, with a good probability of the deal being concluded. We were both greatly excited and impatient, and Tehmina lost no time in starting to plan the furnishings and other details—what the upholstery would be, what the *pardahs* and hangings, and so on, and I the experimental aviaries I had long dreamed about. We had realized that it would be rather inconvenient and tiring for both of us to commute to the city daily since there were no buses to Chembur in those days, the railway station three miles away and the local train service leaving much to be desired. But the overall prospect was so alluring that we didn't worry too much about the disadvantages.

However, fate decreed otherwise. Just when the government accepted Uncle C's final offer, he died—in fact the government's acceptance letter was actually received the day after his death. As it would have been impossible for us at the time to run the new establishment on our joint income and without her father's major contribution, we regretfully did not pursue the matter further. And that was the end of one dream.

After I got the job at the BNHS, Tehmina and I continued to live with her father in the 'Latifia' flat at Chowpati. The annexe was occupied by Saif and Badr as paying guests. They had been left behind in Bombay for their education in the Law College and St Xavier's respectively, while their parents, Faiz and Salima Tyabji, had moved to Karachi on his appointment as Judicial Commissioner in Sind. After my father-in-law's death in February 1927, we had to shift for ourselves and moved into a

comfortable little two-bedroom flat in a very well maintained building named 'Unity Hall' in Rebsch Street, Byculla, overlooking the maidan used as a cricket field by the YMCA two buildings away. It was a pleasant, quiet and respectable residential locality in those days, and must not be judged from the disreputable shabby slum it has become today, with the maidan buried under the lower-middle-class *chawls* crowding cheek by jowl.

In a letter of 23 June 1927 to my sister Kamoo, then in Japan, after we moved into this flat, Tehmina says

a dear little flat—everyone who comes to see me falls in love with it. It is on the first floor and in such a nice locality. There is a maidan in front so that we don't feel all closed in, and it's the next best thing to a garden. There is one big room in front which we have divided by a screen into drawing and dining rooms and then there are two other small rooms and a nice bathroom. One of the rooms is our bedroom and the other is Sálím's 'den', where repose his gun almirah designed by himself, his desk and our book cases and some comfy chairs. He is ever so happy in his room and hates to be disturbed! I have some lovely china and other things as my share of Father's property and this gives the flat such an air! We have bought and had made some very good furniture too, Jacobean period, and really 'though I says it as shouldn't', it looks very pretty. We don't have table cloths on our table in the dining room but have mats and d'oyleys. The table is a good one and has lovely polish and is oval . . . Mrs Naidu and Padmaja dined with us last night and we had such a nice time. They are both charming and such good talkers, so witty, we laughed and laughed till our sides ached . . .

Fortuitously, I discovered that a class friend from my schooldays, Osman Sobhani, occupied the top floor of this three-storey building. Though less directly involved in the Khilafat and Non-Co-operation Movements than his elder brother Umar, Osman was still very close to the inner circle of political big guns like Maulana Shaukat Ali, Mrs Sarojini Naidu, Shuaib Qureshi and others of the day, many of whom used to visit him frequently at his elegant, tastefully appointed bachelor's apartment. We could not help soon getting sucked into the political vortex, but managed to cling only to the outer

fringe because both Tehmina and I had some very dear friends in the 'opposition', both Indian and British, with whom we were anxious to maintain our friendship. Also, I did not want to be sidetracked from my main interest—natural history and birds.

Thus we managed to get the best of both worlds, such as they were. Mrs Naidu used to live in the Taj Hotel in Bombay during those days of high political drama so as to be on tap for the frequent snap meetings of the Congress Working Committee, of which she was President at the time if I remember rightly, or, in any case, a very close associate and confidante of Gandhiji. With her remarkable intellect and sense of humour—sorely lacking in politicians as a species then as now—she always managed to pour oil on troubled waters and restore calm among the factions. Mrs Naidu was not only gifted with a delightful sense of humour but was one of those rare politicians who can laugh at themselves and are not obsessed by their own importance. She was perhaps the only one of the inner circle who joked and traded banter with Gandhiji, who could himself enjoy a good joke even at his own expense. Among informal friendly company Mrs Naidu often referred to the Mahatma as Mickey Mouse, and Gandhiji accepted the compliment with lighthearted toothless gaiety. Even from her pre-political days Mrs Naidu had close friendly ties with the Tyabji family, particularly the Baroda branch, of which the patriarch, my maternal uncle Abbas, later became her comrade-in-arms during the Bardoli and Salt Satyagraha in 1930. On one of her visits to Osman Mrs Naidu discovered that Tehmina and I lived below him, and thereafter she frequently dropped in at our flat on her way up or down with delightful informality and much mutual pleasure. She was a delightful conversationalist, raconteur and mimic, and regaled us with recitations of her latest poems, or with current and past anecdotes and remembrances with inimitable humour. Her assessments of her political contemporaries and their foibles and eccentricities were particularly incisive and entertaining.

It was on one of these impromptu visits that she brought in

with her and introduced us to a panting Maulana Shaukat Ali, the leader of the Khilafat Movement in Bombay, and his co-worker, the handsome and lovable Shuaib Qureshi, who soon became a close friend and constant visitor to our flat. He had a deep, sonorous voice, and often entertained us with his chanting of many of the moving, patriotic and pro-Islamic verses of Iqbal, of whom he was an ardent admirer, both as a poet and as a champion of Islamism. One of his recitations, the beauty and sonorousness of which still rings in my ears, is the touching *shikwa* (panegyric) of the vicissitudes of the island of Sicily, once an important Muslim stronghold in Europe. Shuaib was an ardent Turkophile and hero-worshipper of Enver Pasha. He had been a volunteer with Dr M.A. Ansari's medical mission to the Turks in their war in the Balkans (1912) and won high praise for his courage in rescuing the wounded from the battlefield under fire.

In 1927 frigidaire was a recent innovation in India and I am reminded that Tehmina and I were the first in the family to acquire one. The Kelvinator was a particular joy in the mango season because an ice-cooled alphonso is a thing apart. And this reminds me of a day when some kind friend had sent us eight of the best from his garden, justly famed for the excellence of its mangoes. Presently there was a knock on the door and in walked the breathless biomass of the ponderous Maulana en route up the stairs to Osman's flat. In an effort to seem hospitable Tehmina made the mistake—never repeated again—of asking if he would care to try an ice-cold mango. Of course the great man was ready to oblige, as he said he had never tasted a refrigerated mango before. The great mistake Tehmina made and realized too late was to place for gentility's sake the entire bowlful before a hungry guest of that size. To our suppressed consternation the mangoes disappeared into that capacious paunch one after another at astonishing speed, with an approving exclamation or two after each, until we were left staring at the empty dish. This was the price of a valuable lesson well and truly learned.

At one time a staunch Gandhiite, nationalist and Congressman, Shuaib unfortunately found cause to turn a complete

somersault later and become a hundred per cent anti-Congress, pro-Jinnah and pro-Pakistan. He migrated to Pakistan when Bhopal State—where he was a minister in the nawab's government—was taken over in the Indian Union, and in due course ended up as a minister in the central Pakistan cabinet.

One of the first things we did on shifting to a flat of our own, after my father-in-law's death, was to purchase a small car. It was a seven horse-power Baby Austin, the collapsible canvas-top model with wire-ribbed (cycle) wheels. It cost Rs 1700 brand new, shock absorbers and screen wiper extra. It did forty-five miles to the gallon when the price of petrol, thanks to cut-throat competition between the two main oil companies, Burma Oil and Shell, was 11 annas per gallon. Roadside pumps were few and far between, and petrol was available mostly in two-gallon cans—green for BOC and red for Shell. An entry in a tattered pocket notebook of the time reminds me that petrol for a shikar trip to Lonand, beyond Poona, and back to Bombay, three-hundred miles plus, cost Rs 13 and 8 annas.

We usually drove to the Fort together and I dropped Tehmina at her office (Women's Council) in the south wing of the Town Hall on my way to the Prince of Wales Museum. 'Jane' (as the car was named by Tehmina after one of her favourite authors, Jane Austen) was driven up parallel sloping planks and parked for the day on the raised open verandah outside the then Natural History gallery. The little car provided great fun on Sundays and holidays for picnics and for bird collecting or small game shooting trips in the Bombay neighbourhood—in Salsette, and on the mainland, and beyond. It also provided thoroughly enjoyable leisurely motoring holidays to Poona, Aurangabad, Nasik and other places within 200 miles or so of Bombay. The roads were untarred, usually full of pot-holes and very dusty, which inhibited venturing further afield. With such a lightweight car one had to pick one's way slowly and carefully and there was the constant nuisance of trucks and heavier vehicles overtaking and covering one in a pall of dust. Many of the rivers and nullahs were unbridged and impassable for the little car during the monsoon. I remember our once getting badly stuck in the sandy bed of the unbridged Bhima

river on the main Poona-Aurangabad road, the engine stalling mid-stream when half under water and being dragged out quite casually, without any apparent effort, by a supercilious pair of bullocks being led back to the village after the day's ploughing! The lightness of the car had another great advantage: if it ran out of petrol in the city it could easily be perambulated single-handedly to the nearest filling station or depot.

From a little beyond Poona, and up to Sholapur and beyond, blackbuck were plentiful and hardly ever out of sight on both sides of the road, constantly crossing and recrossing in front of the car. One could stop almost anywhere and do a short cross-country stalk of a shootable trophy. No shooting licence was necessary and it was normal practice for weekend 'sportsmen' to 'rail off' extra animals killed to any one of the bigger hotels in Bombay, for instance the Taj, without previous intimation, way-billed by the railways as 'Dead deer' and 'Freight to pay'. The hotels gladly took delivery and paid the sender Rs 5 per animal with thanks. During the open shooting season several such consignments, even from so-called bona fide sportsmen, reached the various hotels every day, and venison was freely advertised on the menu. In such black-cotton-soil country the antelopes were highly vulnerable in the monsoon, when the heavy clay hampered speedy escape and professional hunters took full advantage of their helplessness. Small wonder that this sort of commercialized slaughter, aided and abetted by four-wheel-drive jeeps, powerful spotlights, the free issue of firearms ('crop protection') and relaxed law-and-order conditions after World War II, especially since Independence, have completely wiped out blackbuck from this area.

In the Unity Hall flat we were often visited by Sarojini Naidu and her daughter, Padmaja. They frequently stayed on for pot-luck and we drove them back to their hotel in 'Jane' afterwards. Four well-grown adults made a snug fit in that tiny frail-looking car, but never so snug as on a memorable occasion when the ponderous Maulana Shaukat Ali overflowed the front bucket seat, with me driving and Sarojini and Tehmina

jammed against each other in the rear. Loaded thus the car presented a comically Maulana-oriented tilt. But the sight would have gladdened the heart of its makers; it demonstrated what the midget could do at a pinch.

7

Jobs 1923-9 and Germany 1929-30

While unsuccessfully job-hunting and marking time for some congenial natural history assignment, I was accommodated by kindly cousins with a temporary clerical position in their cotton exporting firm of N. Futehally & Co., where I arrogated to myself the grandiose designation of 'Extra-assistant sub-deputy head clerk, *pro tem*'. The salary, euphemistically called 'allowance', commenced with Rs 150 per month, but soon backslid to Rs 100 when the firm sustained a serious financial reverse in Japan through the failure of an important textile-mill client.

I had gratefully accepted the job under pressure of circumstances and without enthusiasm, but having had some training in office management had hoped all the same to be able to instil a semblance of order into the chaos that pervaded the office routine of my kind-hearted employers. It seemed a wonder to me that this old firm, established as long ago as 1870 or thereabouts, had managed to survive the violent vicissitudes of the intervening years with so little regard for any sort of methodical system in its business affairs. I regret to admit that after the first flush of optimism and reforming zeal I soon gave up trying, because my impact seemed obviously too feeble, and their will to change too half-hearted to last in that happy-go-lucky atmosphere. That N. Futehally & Co. had endured so many serious crises is due entirely to the admirable unity and spirit of reasonable accommodation which all five partner-brothers maintained through thick and thin.

At this time I was offered a business job by another relation who was then opening a branch office in Aden. It sounded attractive enough financially in my state of joblessness, but I am happy to have resisted the temptation and declined, because from the antecedents and clever practices of this sanctimonious and highly successful businessman I would doubtless have been expected to do similar clever things that, squeamishly enough, I would not have enjoyed.

As luck would have it, after a protracted palaver the BNHS had just succeeded in persuading the Government of Bombay to budget the appointment of a Guide Lecturer in the newly opened Natural History Section of the Prince of Wales Museum. Reverend Father Blatter happened to be Chairman of the selection committee for the post and supported my candidature strongly. My being appointed was largely due to him and to Prater, the Curator, under whom the Guide Lecturer would have to work. Fate had decreed that the selection committee should hold its meeting during the fortnight in which my brother-in-law Shums and I had planned a shooting holiday in the Uttoor forests of Adilabad district of Hyderabad State, then some of the finest tiger country in the peninsula. With great disappointment I had to back out of this venture (ill-fated as it later proved) since I was a candidate for the post. A few days after I had begun work in my new appointment, the very sad news came that Shums had been fatally mauled by a tiger that he had wounded and was following up without sufficient caution. His plucky young companion, Azeem, who had beaten off the animal, was also badly clawed and bitten, but was fortunate enough to be removed in time to better medical care in Bombay, where he recovered after weeks of grave anxiety.

Shums, who had married my eldest sister Ashraf, was in his own way a remarkable, curiously conflicting but lovable character, and very good company, especially in camp. He was good natured and talented and better than average at doing most things that took his fancy, so long as they had nothing to do with his profession or family responsibilities. For example he could fritter away endless effort and time in activities like

stamp collecting, amateur theatricals, music, and days on end of cricket umpiring and club-going; but dearest of all to his heart was big game hunting in which, ironically, he never had much luck. *The* great ambition of his life was to shoot a tiger: he lived for it and, as it happened, died for it. Shikar was such an obsession with him that wags had named him Nawab Hārdām Shikār Jung.

Planning the syllabus and organizing the work of the new Nature Study Department was enjoyable. In the comparatively short life of the scheme I think a marked increase of intelligent interest in natural history in pupils and teachers of the participating schools, and in the Museum Natural History section's popularity with the general public, was clearly discernible. To begin with only a few secondary and high schools were selected, which sent classes by appointment and in rotation for simple, informal talks on animal life, illustrated with lantern slides, models and museum specimens. I particularly enjoyed talking to pupils from the School for the Blind, because of the lively interest they showed, and I never ceased to marvel at their almost magical aptitude for grasping anatomical details merely by passing their fingers over the exhibits of skulls and bones specially prepared for them. The usefulness and success of the Society's Nature Education Scheme was so gratifying that it seemed sacrilegious of the Bombay Government to have discontinued it after only a three-years' run on the dubious pretext, considering the paltry expenditure involved, of financial stringency. Thus, as soon as possible after Independence, during the sympathetic Chief Ministership of Bombay State of the friendly B.G. Kher, Prater and I as Curator and Honorary Secretary of the Society respectively, pressed for and succeeded in getting the Nature Study Scheme resuscitated, with M.R. Raut as its organizer. With a widening of its scope and activities it has been functioning satisfactorily since about 1949 and is no doubt responsible, at least in part, for the noticeable increase of awareness and interest in wildlife and nature conservation among the youth and general public of Maharashtra in recent years.

However, two years of guide-lecturing were enough for me.

I realized that my real metier was birds and decided to undergo a course of training in systematic and field ornithology before settling down to it, hopefully as a whole-time occupation. As to how I would keep the wolf from the door thereafter did not worry me then. Ornithology has always been the Cinderella of Indian zoology and there was no university or institution in the country where such training could be had. I had therefore written to the British Museum (Natural History) and to the Berlin University Zoological Museum to ask what facilities were available there. The political atmosphere between India and Britain at that period, 1929—when, according to a scandalized Churchill a half-naked fakir had the temerity to parley on equal terms with the representative of His Majesty the King Emperor—was charged with so much bias and bitterness that, as was apparent from the discouragingly lukewarm response I got from the British Museum, conditions of work in Britain would have been uncongenial. On the other hand, although I was not personally known to Professor Erwin Stresemann till then, his response was so cordial and welcoming that I immediately decided to go to Berlin.

As part of the practical training in taxonomy, Stresemann had suggested my bringing a collection of Indian birds to work out under his guidance. A collection of about 200 birds had just been received from Burma, collected by J.K. Stanford, ICS, a keen ornithologist member of the BNHS, with the assistance of the Society's skinner, E. Henricks, in I think Henzada district. Stanford had undertaken this collection at the instance of Dr Claud B. Ticehurst, who was evidently meaning to work it out himself. Ticehurst was so outraged at the thought of an obscure greenhorn Indian trying to do so, and that too with the help of a naughty *German* (so soon after the Kaiser's war) that he wrote a nasty official protest to the Society behind my back saying that the collector, Mr Stanford, would never condone this slight. Both Sir Reginald Spence, then Honorary Secretary, and Prater, however, had faith in my competence and agreed that with Stresemann's help and guidance the collection would be well served. History does not record whether Mr Stanford did in fact feel any serious resentment at the Society's action or

whether it was merely Dr Ticehurst's solicitous imagination. Mr Stanford himself never expressed it officially or openly at that time or afterwards, nor was he anything but most friendly and cordial to me when we met at the 1950 International Ornithological Congress in Uppsala in Sweden, or at subsequent meetings, or in correspondence.

There is no doubt that Berlin proved for me the luckiest turning at the crossroads of my ornithological career. Considering that I was only an unknown and aspiring ornithologist at the time, and an entire stranger to him personally, the warmth of Stresemann's welcome and the painstaking co-operation and guidance he gave me from the first day—and throughout the entire period I was privileged to work with him—were heart-warming. His simplicity and modesty, his unassuming erudition, his lively, almost boyish humour, and the vastness of his scientific knowledge have left in me a vivid impression and admiration for the man, the scientist, the mentor and the friend, that has endured and grown with the years. I considered him my guru to the end. Appeals to him for advice and assistance in knotty problems of taxonomy, ecology or zoogeography never failed to elicit prompt and detailed replies, all scribbled by hand, the lines often running diagonally across a sheet and none too easy to decipher until the code was broken, yet meticulously reasoned, documented and free from all ambiguity. Considering that I was only one of his numerous worldwide proteges, it is a standing wonder to me how Stresemann ever managed to keep abreast with his correspondence and up-to-date with the increasing spate of scientific literature, and at the same time still found time to continue his own research and discharge the other responsibilities inherent in his acknowledged position as the doyen of world ornithologists.

Kinnear, who had himself been one of the people who, as Curator of the BNHS, had helped to kindle my youthful interest in birds in earlier years, seemed a changed personality in the vitiated Indo-British atmosphere of the Gandhian era, and in the aura of the British Museum. In August 1929 one of the prominent Indians we found settled in Berlin since before and all through World War I was Champakraman Pillay, a

'fugitive' member of the revolutionary group which called itself the Provisional Government of India and had some sort of recognition from the Kaiser. Its President was a curious simpleton, though a completely serious and dedicated visionary, Raja Mahendra Pratap, a dispossessed *taluqdar* of UP. M.N. Roy, another revolutionary member of the Provisional Government, had shifted his activities to Moscow, I think, and I did not meet him. Pillay claimed to have had frequent meetings with the Kaiser during the progress of the war in Europe to apprise him of the subversive propaganda (anti-British) conducted vicariously by the Provisional Government in India. Like Raja Mahendra Pratap, Pillay was a sincere and serious activist, but, unlike his leader, a more practical and pragmatic revolutionary. After the defeat of Germany both had a price put on their heads by the British Indian government and so found it more prudent to continue living in Germany. Pillay, we discovered, was an excellent cook and gave us delicious Indian meals from time to time prepared from ersatz *masalas*. He visited his native Kerala after umpteen years of exile once India attained independence, but later returned to Germany and died there. Raja Mahendra Pratap also returned to India from Japan, where he had moved after the Kaiser's eclipse, and settled down in Dehra Dun. He must have felt seriously disillusioned by the comparatively scant fuss made over him by the Nehru government of the day, as well as by the public at large; but this was not surprising to those who knew him, though everyone will concede his integrity and dedication and the personal sacrifices he had made for the cause.

It was while working at the Zoological Museum of Berlin University that I first made the acquaintance of Bernhard Rensch, a brilliant young zoologist who had been making methodical collections of birds and other animal groups in the Sunda Islands. His special studies were about the problems of geographical variation produced by climatic factors in the context of the origin of species and evolution. He had been newly appointed on the museum staff in the Department of Malacology (the science of molluscs), another field of his specialization, for lack of an immediate vacancy in ornithology.

Bernhard and I took to each other immediately, as did Tehmina to Bernhard's friendly and charming wife, Ilse. They have been among my closest foreign friends through the intervening years of peace and war. After a varied career in learned zoological positions, including the directorship of Prague Museum after the 'liberation' of Czechoslovakia by Hitler, he retired a few years ago from the directorship of the University Zoological Institute, Münster. I have a very great regard for Rensch as an interpretative biologist and as a sensitive, artistic and cultured intellectual.

In the bird room of the museum I also had my first meeting with Ernst Mayr, another brilliant and upcoming young protege of Stresemann who had just returned from a major bird-collecting expedition in the New Guinea region, and whom I met again in the USA only after World War II. He had emigrated from Germany just before the War and had been working extensively in New York on taxonomy and speciation problems with the Rothschild bird collection purchased by the American Museum of Natural History. Ernst Mayr is currently Emeritus Professor of Zoology at Harvard University and undisputably among the topmost biologists of the world today. Unfortunately—in marked contrast to his mentor Stresemann's unassuming modesty—Mayr makes you feel he is not unaware of the fact.

Here I also had the pleasure and privilege of meeting for the first time (and thereafter frequently at the Berlin Zoo and Aquarium, of which he was the Director), the jolly and indefatigable biologist Oskar Heinroth and his remarkable wife, Magdalena, dedicated pioneers of the modern scientific cult of bird behaviour study. Indeed, Heinroth can rightfully be called the Father of Ethology, a discipline which has in many ways revolutionized the old concept of establishing phylogenetic relationships between bird groups solely on the basis of anatomy and morphology, and helped to bridge the yawning gulf between systematics and biology. Heinroth's studies of living birds opened my eyes to problems and possibilities that had received but scant consideration before. They helped to provide a direction and strong ecological bias to my subsequent

work on Indian birds, which has drawn complimentary comment from reviewers.

The working out under Stresemann's guidance of the collection of Burmese birds I had brought from Bombay gave me a good idea of the techniques and procedures of taxonomical work and also of the pitfalls with which they are beset, including the danger of hasty conclusions based on slender 'eye of faith' premises. Apart from working in the Museum, the highlight of my study-leave in Germany was the coveted opportunity of visiting the island of Heligoland with Stresemann, and participating in the bird migration studies being conducted there under the direction of the enthusiastic Dr Rudolf Drost.

Heligoland is a barren rock, standing abruptly out of the North Sea at the mouths of the rivers Elbe and Weser, about thirty miles from the German mainland, and directly on the route of migratory birds from the north. It is triangular in shape and with sheer rocky sides 200 feet high. The top of the island—or the Oberland—is an undulating tableland, beautifully turfed with green but practically treeless due to the heavy gales that ceaselessly sweep over it. Therefore, in order to tempt the migrants down, a sunken trapping garden—the Sapskule—about 120 metres long and 15 wide has been constructed at the northern end of the Oberland, thickly planted with shrubs and bushes and provided with little pools of fresh water for the birds. The shrubbery helps to hide the cleverly designed tapering chicken-wire traps, ending in small glass-fronted boxes into which the birds can be driven and concentrated and removed for ringing. The depth of the sunken garden is increased by a concrete wall 2.5 metres high all round the basin, which affords further protection from the wind to the fairly tall shrubs within. It was at Heligoland that I had my first practical demonstration of the ringing techniques that have since been so widely and successfully employed by the BNHS in its various field projects.

In addition to the trapping garden, Heligoland possesses a powerful lighthouse of some 42,000 candle-power, whose beams, on certain cloud-overcast nights in spring and autumn, act as a magnet for tens of thousands of migratory birds. The

birds dash against the glass panes round the turret and fall dazed and fluttering on to the surrounding balcony, whence they are gathered in gunny sacks in enormous numbers and taken for ringing. This attraction of the migrating birds to the lighthouse is essentially the same as what happens on similar cloudy and starless monsoon nights at the Meghalaya village of Jatinga in north-east India, sensationally reported by some of our newspapers as 'mass suicide' by birds! During the spring and autumn migrations the Biological Station on Heligoland is thronged by university students and amateur bird-watchers, not only from Germany but from many other European countries as well, and there is no dearth of willing and experienced hands. On a night like this the lighthouse is alive with enthusiastic young people running up and down with sackfuls of birds so collected. The 'reigning' lighthouse keeper and his family lived on one of the floors through which the winding staircase ran. His wife was a dreaded termagant and a terror for the volunteers as she was wont to burst in on them in the middle of the night, ranting violently about being disturbed in her slumber. It was comic to see big hefty toughs wilting so abjectly under her thunderous assault and tiptoeing sheepishly up and down the stairs; but anyone who has experienced such a riotous night at the lighthouse will readily sympathize with the harassed female.

Under the right meteorological conditions as many as 1,200 or more birds may be taken in a single night for ringing, in addition to the hundreds upon hundreds gathered by the local Heligolanders, who turn out in force on a god-sent night like this, to replenish their larders. The meadows for many metres around the base of the tower are pulsating with exhausted birds or with those that have fluttered down to the ground, dazed or dying after dashing against the light. The holocaust is further aggravated by the ravages of the swarms of stray cats, protected like our holy cows by popular sentiment, for which Heligoland was as notorious as was old-time Constantinople for dogs. All this was before World War II. Since then conditions may have improved, with the general adoption of the international convention for fixing nets of soft material around the lanterns of lighthouses to prevent mortality among migrating birds that dash into them.

Hyderabad State Ornithological Survey

It was while refugeeing at Kihim as an unemployed and unsuccessful job-hunter after my return from Germany in early 1930, and pondering how I could utilize what little expertise I had acquired abroad, that the idea of the regional ornithological surveys first came to me. There were vast tracts of the Indian subcontinent, particularly the Princely States, whose avifauna had been little explored and studied. I offered the BNHS to carry out systematic field surveys of the bird life of these areas on a voluntary basis, provided they would raise the necessary funds to cover the actual working expenses, transport, etc., arrange for camping facilities and local assistance from the state forest and other government departments, and loan me the services of one or two of the Society's field collectors and taxidermists. Hyderabad State represented the largest gap in our ornithological knowledge; it was the obvious first priority, considering the important results recently obtained by the Vernay Scientific Survey in the adjoining area of the Eastern Ghats. At that time many of the key positions in the Nizam's administration were held by British ICS or Political Department officers on loan from the Government of India. Most of them were sportsmen-naturalists and members of the BNHS, keenly interested in birds and therefore sympathetically responsive to the Society's appeal. Also, the Finance Minister, Sir Akbar Hydari, a distant connection, and some other well-wishers in the state who had a good regard for my work, lent

their personal support to the BNHS proposal and appeal. Thus, after seemingly endless ding-dong correspondence with the nizam's government authorities, a grant of Rs 3,000 for three months of field work was finally sanctioned, and soon thereafter the Hyderabad State Ornithological Survey began. As the entire state could not be covered within the stipulated period, the government sanctioned a renewal of the grant for a further two months.

Hugh Whistler, the foremost British student of Indian birds in his day, was, like E.C. Stuart Baker, also an officer in the Imperial Police Service. He served the entire sixteen years or so before his premature voluntary retirement in Punjab. During his tenure in India he collected and studied birds in the field so thoroughly and perceptively that one unfamiliar with his professional efficiency would suspect police work to have been for him merely an occasional spare-time occupation. By the time he left the country he had acquired an unsurpassed knowledge not only of the ornithology of Punjab but also of neighbouring Kashmir and the NWFP, and, in the process, of the entire British Indian Empire as well. After settling down at Battle in Sussex he continued to develop his expertise on birds, particularly Indian and Palaearctic, but now more on the taxonomic side with only periodical forays for field collecting.

My relations with Whistler, strangely as with so many of my English friends, started on a somewhat jarring and acrimonious note. In an admirable serial article he was writing in the *Journal* of the BNHS around the year 1928, 'The Study of Indian Birds', Whistler had made a statement concerning the structure of the elongated tail feathers of the Racket-tailed Drongo which I contradicted. I did not know Whistler personally at that time, and he had possibly never heard of me as having anything to do with birds. He was obviously peeved at being openly contradicted and wrote a rather snooty letter to the editors, Sir Reginald Spence and S.H. Prater. However, after re-examining his specimens and being convinced that I was right he corrected himself in a subsequent issue of the *Journal*. After years of close and fruitful collaboration in my various regional bird surveys, Whistler reminded me of the drongo's

tail incident in a letter (dated 24.10.1938), thanking me for some bird skins I had sent him, thus: 'So now I should like to thank you properly and most heartily for what is merely an addition to long years of help and kindness which I have already experienced at your hands. It has been a very great benefit to me that we drifted into collaboration largely in its beginning as an accident when you pointed out my mistake over the webs of a drongo's tail feathers—and the mistake has proved to me well worth while.'

Up till that time I had no practical experience in running a methodical bird survey of this kind, so I approached Whistler for advice and suggestions and asked at the same time if he would be willing to undertake the taxonomical work on the Hyderabad collection, since that would be merely an extension of the excellent study he had just finished on the birds collected by the Vernay Scientific Survey in a contiguous area of the Eastern Ghats. Whistler seemed only too eager to collaborate, and I soon received from him a list of excellent suggestions on how such a survey could be carried out. These suggestions, together with the helpful tips received in the field from time to time from my guru, Stresemann, proved invaluable during this and subsequent bird surveys. Whistler's prescriptions are so pertinent and excellent that, though it may be questionable whether this is the right place, I have included them as an appendix, as a model for all who may hereafter chance to engage in similar field work. That the results of the regional bird surveys have received such generous acclaim and comment must be attributed in large measure to my following Whistler's admirable prescriptions and to his energetic participation through the running correspondence he maintained with me throughout the Hyderabad survey, and during all the subsequent ones as well, right up to the time of his untimely death in 1944.

Mist nets had not appeared on the scene till then, nor indeed until considerably later. But after using them in the last few years I am convinced that no field collecting can be regarded as thorough where mist nets have not been employed to supplement shooting and visual observation. The unsuspected

presence of many shy and skulking birds of dense shrubbery—especially of tropical jungle as in the East Himalayan foothills—is revealed only when they fall into nets suitably deployed or in the dark hours of dawn and dusk, or during the night; otherwise they are easily missed. Japanese mist nets first came into use in India only in 1959 with the inception of the WHO/BNHS bird ringing project. They have somewhat shaken my confidence in the comprehensiveness of my own collecting before that time. Their use has already added several species, unnoticed earlier, to the bird lists of various surveyed areas, and doubtless more species could be added by further intensive netting.

I have always been an admirer of good handwriting. To me it is an indication of a tidy mind and of a striving after meticulousness and perfection. This generalization is perhaps too simple to hold, and there are far too many exceptions to prove the rule, e.g. Stresemann, Roy Hawkins, *et al.* But in the case of Whistler it was clearly demonstrable. He wrote all his letters, comments and taxonomical notes, including tables of measurements and suchlike things, in a bold, clear manuscript, neatly aligned. In days when general devaluation has touched even calligraphy, and legible—leave alone good—handwriting has become old fashioned, it was a refreshing experience to see letters from him. I don't know how he kept track of what he wrote because there was no sign of carbon copies having been made. Yet he seldom repeated anything or forgot what he had said before.

Many of the areas I selected for the specimen collecting in Hyderabad State (Oct.–Dec. 1931, Mar.–Apr. 1932) had primitive communication facilities. Their remoteness, partly, was my rationale for selecting them. They could be reached only on foot or by unsprung bullock carts known as *khachars* over dusty, deeply rutted and bumpy cross-country tracks, or *kutchas* forest roads cut up by unbridged rocky nullahs, mostly dry in that season—roads that would nowadays be euphemistically termed jeepable. However, that was long before the jeep was born. Such nullahs were crossed by the cart storming down one steep boulder-strewn bank and up the opposite one, to the frantic shouting, stick-waving and tail-twisting of the

bullocks by the cartmen. I usually preferred to walk behind the cart (and so did Tehmina) for part of the way in the shady bits, and when the sun wasn't too hot, or when the cart ride got too painful. The wooden axles frequently gave way under this violent treatment, but apart from the time lost in repair this presented no problem because the cartmen were excellent rough-and-ready carpenters and well used to such minor calamities. They would just walk into the jungle, hack down a suitable hardwood sapling with their handy all-purpose *koita*, fashion it into a serviceable axle, and we would soon be on our way again. I recollect that, once, when the moon was nearing full, in order to avoid the midday heat we started in the late afternoon by foot and *khachar*, hoping to reach our next camp at a forest hamlet by seven or eight. A broken axle and some other unforeseen hold-ups delayed us on the way, so that we reached our destination only at 1 a.m. instead, hungry and dead beat. Luckily it was bright moonlight all the way. We decided to turn in at once and leave the eating till morning as it would take too long for Rahim, our admirable cook-bearer—one of the best of his tribe that UP produced before the days of Partition—to open up the kitchen things and prepare a meal. But Rahim was scandalized at the suggestion and would have none of it. He could not bear to think of our going to bed hungry, insisted on making a hasty wood fire and unpacking the barest essentials. In a few minutes we were served with sizzling grilled kidneys and liver of a chinkara I had shot on the way, with some cold *chapatis* he had brought for himself. Not much of a meal, but only then were we allowed to go to bed. Such faithful and considerate servants as Rahim belong to a bygone age and to an extinct species that we shall never have the good fortune to see any more, alas.

Often these localities were also off the few and far-between bus routes. Public motor transport in the state was still poorly developed, and privately-owned buses were rare in the *mofussil* towns and out-of-the-way stations. Usually, they were ancient Ford or Chevrolet cars converted by local talent into rattling bone-shakers, with sides of 3-ply wood or galvanized iron sheeting and no restriction on the number of passengers they

could carry. Even these were often difficult to hire without some coaxing, or various degrees of official pressure from the local police sub-inspector or other official to whom orders for rendering assistance to the survey party had trickled down from above. That the private buses were truly independent left little doubt in one, from the behaviour and business methods of their owner-drivers, who, by and large, were a sorry tribe. In spite of repeated exhortations to them to be punctual, and solemn assurances from them to come for loading up at six in the morning, there would be no sign of the bus till seven or eight, while you sat on your pile of baggage all packed and ready, or paced up and down muttering curses. The unabashed justification was invariably the same—driver 'taking tea' or 'taking food'. After much haranguing and noisy argumentation and disarranging and rearranging the baggage and equipment—specimen boxes, hurricane lanterns, galvanized iron buckets, bags of rice and *ata*, ghee and kerosene tins and the various other odds and ends inside the bus and on the roof (the latter usually surmounted by a dome-shaped openwork bamboo basket of live chickens for progressive transfer to the menu)—the driver would suddenly remember that petrol had to be filled and off we would go to the petrol pump. No electric power, so pumping by hand, so further delay. With many or all of these routine obstacles it was seldom before nine that we could strike the road, when the day would already be warming up nicely. Thereafter, arrival at destination depended on many imponderables—the condition of the road, the health of the wheezy, asthmatic engine, and the wear of the ominous-looking much-retreaded tyres. Camp sites varied between a PWD Dak Bungalow, a Forest Rest House, and sometimes a vacated *chauri* or disused cowshed. At that time, before Independence, dak and forest bungalows, specially the less frequented out-of-the-way ones, were poorly appointed: a couple of the standard iron bedsteads (without mattress or pillow) and a few wooden chairs and tables, etc. were usually all they could provide; you had thus to travel fully self-contained. Bedding, towels, sheets, buckets, cooking utensils, lamps, crockery, cutlery, etc., all had to be carted round—plus folding camp beds for unexpected

cowsheds. Tehmina had a flair for transforming even the dilapidated *chauris*—to which we were sometimes driven at a pinch—into cosy liveable 'homelike' places when a longer halt was involved. On arrival at a camp, while the others were out collecting, she went into action, getting the place swept and tidied up and giving it little womanly touches with the colourful curtains, counterpanes, flower vases and suchlike trifles that she always insisted on carrying around with her: they made all the difference.

With bullock carts or manual portorage, where motor buses were not feasible, it was necessary to fix short distances between camps, perhaps eight or ten miles; with motor transport they seldom exceeded thirty to fifty miles. The process of opening up the specimen boxes, arranging the work tables and general settling-in took a couple of hours, and it was therefore usually late afternoon by the time we were ready for the evening round of specimen collecting. My strategy, refined by experience and circumstances, was to brief my assistant, the taxidermist, and leave to him the job of collecting the commoner birds around the camp. One of the BNHS field assistants who accompanied me on most of my later bird surveys was a young East Indian Christian—as a point of honour his confreres insisted on differentiating him from a mere Goan in those Portuguese colonial days. His name was John Gabriel, a quiet, dependable and amazingly fast bird skinner who turned out excellent bird skins. Only one who has tried skinning a small bird like a Flowerpecker or Leaf Warbler, often badly shot up to begin with, and stuff it not only as a presentable study specimen but also show the minute details of plumage so necessary for subspecific diagnosis, can appreciate what a tricky, patience-trying and time-consuming business it is. Yet I have known Gabriel sitting down to skin after the morning's round of collecting, and finish up to twenty-six clean and excellently prepared small to medium-sized skins before dinner. Gabriel also could be trusted to correctly identify the birds he was told specially to look out for, which made things very satisfactory in every way. Every forenoon when we returned from our respective collecting rounds it was a ritual for me to ask Gabriel

what luck he had had, and all too frequently the answer would be the same—his own picturesque and invariable formula—‘I tried and tried to get some goodgood birds but saw nothing except this’, (dejectedly pulling out the mangled remains of a myna or some other common bird from his haversack) ‘so I said “Let’s take”’. In the absence of ‘goodgood’ birds I must confess sometimes having had recourse to the same pragmatic procedure myself, since for subspecific determination common birds are also of importance. By temperament and deportment Gabriel was as satisfactory a field assistant and camp follower as one could wish. His one great drawback was at meals: each time he shovelled in a mouthful his spoon would rattle metallically against his teeth in a way that was normally irritating, but which could become positively maddening to frayed nerves.

From a study of large-scale Survey of India topographical sheets for diverse and promising physical features, and after discussion with local forest staff and village shikaris, areas within a radius of ten miles or so, which could be conveniently investigated on foot, were identified. This general plan worked satisfactorily on the whole during my other regional surveys as well; few biotopes or facies escaped attention and few bird species got away uncollected or unrecorded. This at least is what I had hopefully imagined at the time; it was only years later, after mist netting came into general use, that I realized that a few nocturnal or exceptionally unobtrusive species possibly did manage to evade the reckoning.

The opening gambit of the Hyderabad ornithological survey of October 1931—itself the first of the series of such regional surveys—was Mananur, a largish, sprawling village situated on the Amrabad Plateau at an altitude of 2,000 feet in the Nallamalai Hills—a *taluka* headquarters town in Mahboobnagar district. The excellent reserved forest around was of the mixed moist-deciduous type, with an abundance of teak and *nallamaddi* (*Terminalia tomentosa*)—my first experience of many such sylvan paradises explored subsequently in so many different corners of the country. The Mananur locality stands out vividly in my memory for its wealth of wild animals, including a greater number of tigers than I had ever experienced before.

I recall the thrill of seeing the forest roads covered with the fresh pug marks of tiger, panther, bear and other wildlife each early morning as I tramped along them behind the local Chenchu tracker, and the greater thrill on sighting some of the beasts themselves, as frequently happened in the course of a morning’s collecting. The second camp, Farahabad, twelve miles to the south and on a higher plateau (2,800 feet) was earmarked by the State government for development as a hill station, but the plan never materialized. It was the home of an Adivasi tribe, the Chenchus, so well studied and documented by the anthropologist, Fürer-Haimendorf. There was no road up to the little rest-house on the hill, only a foot track, so the baggage and equipment had to be carried in head-loads by Chenchu tribals—men, women and children—*begar* (forced labour) I fear, raked up by the local *tahsildar*. Their official daily hire, as I recall in disbelief, was one seer (c. 1 kg) of jowar per head. Payment was in kind, since even up to that time the Chenchus, living so cut off from ‘civilization’, had little use for money, so we were told, and preferred to receive their wages this way. To pay for services during camp we had brought up a goodly supply of jowar from the plains. The price of jowar at the time was Re 1 for twelve seers, which made it easy enough on the budget.

The atrocious system of *begar*—actually a form of slavery—persisted in the nizam’s state in practice long after it was abolished by law elsewhere. The *patel* or village headman was bound to provide manual labour for government work whenever called upon. Therefore he would just pounce upon any able-bodied male in the village, regardless of whatever he might be engaged in at the time, and press him into service. The daily wage of the labourer was fixed by the government, as described above. In one instance my survey party arrived at an out-of-the-way forest village, where a relay of porters was to be available. It was rather late in the morning and the menfolk had already left for their fields. The *patel* ransacked hut after hut and found them all empty, till he came upon one where a small, tired group was lying fast asleep. He roused the men and promptly collared the lot for our service, in spite of their

protests that they were only professional musicians who had been hired from a distant village for a wedding here, and were sleeping off their tiredness after playing music all night. Their pleading fell on deaf ears; the *patel*, who had had orders from his *tahsildar*, dragged the men out and they were soon loaded up to follow us. Fortunately for them, a fresh relay was available at the next village some five miles away, and I was glad to release the musicians to go back and resume their slumbers.

Another *tahsildar* had provided me with the official printed schedule of rates, fixed by the nizam's government some years before, for supplies to government servants on duty tour—goat Re 1, chicken 2 annas (= c. 12 paise), other things in proportion, and eggs almost for the asking—and all that in Hali (the nizam's) currency, which was equivalent to two-thirds of the British Indian. Though no longer wholly valid in 1931, the price of everything was low enough to make the survey possible well within the Hyderabad government's subsidy.

At Nelipaka, a backwoods cluster of dilapidated hovels on the bank of the Godavari river, a few miles from Borgampad, we were encamped in an abandoned cowshed on the outskirts of the village. Walls had been improvised from old bamboo matting which partly kept out the fierce afternoon sun. Word had gone round that a party of queer Bombayites had come with the object of shooting every kind of bird found in the locality and noting down how they tasted. Thus, soon after our arrival we were besieged by a motley crowd of urchins and other inquisitive village folk, some of whom offered themselves as local shikaris and who were in fact well known to be unabashed professional poachers. I was told that a large crocodile came out every day to bask on a little islet in the river, a few minutes' walk down the bank. They would inform me when it was next sighted in case I was interested in shooting it, as in those days I was indeed ever keen to do. Two days later, as I returned from the morning's collecting at about noon, a village shikari was waiting with the news that he had seen the crocodile an hour before, and he offered to guide me to the spot. Of course, true to pattern, there was no crocodile when I arrived on the scene, but while scanning the precincts with binoculars, and the

vegetation along the river's edge, I noticed a black object partially hidden among the marginal reeds, about 200 metres upstream, which could well be the head of a partly submerged crocodile. Closer approach revealed this object to be a bloated human body which was later identified as the old woman who had left her hut in the village after a violent quarrel with her daughter-in-law, and been missing since. To my horror I then realized that the point from where the washing and drinking water for our camp came was directly below this, so that we had obviously been living on the unsavoury decoction of this old lady all the time. The stinking cadaver was fished out by the loudly wailing relations, but it had to await police investigation and a clean report before it could be disposed of. Due to the urgency of the matter, and the 'blue haze' already gathered around the putrefying carcass, the relations trudged nine miles in the burning sun to the nearest police station. The sub-inspector in charge, however, decided that it was too late in the evening for him to bother: therefore it was not till 7.30 or so next morning that he turned up, mounted on a miserable *tattoo*.

The sub-inspector, no doubt smelling a heaven-sent opportunity, seemed determined to be as difficult as possible, in spite of the piteous pleadings of the bereaved relations and my own remonstrances. He said that Duty made it imperative for him to have a post-mortem conducted and a thorough investigation undertaken before permitting disposal of the remains. And the man was so ostentatiously adamant about this absolutely mandatory procedure that it looked as if the body would have to lie there and befoul the neighbourhood for at least another twenty-four hours. As the officer seemed so righteously bent upon upholding the letter of the law, and finding my arguments of no avail, I set out for the morning's collecting. When I returned three hours later I found the body and its wailing attendants vanished, along with the sub-inspector, and everything in the village unexpectedly quiet and normal. It seems that soon after my back was turned the deceased woman's son had been able to make the self-righteous official see reason, and all for fifty rupees, scraped together with great difficulty by the mourning relations. Thereupon, the matter was closed abruptly

and to the satisfaction of all concerned. I was reminded by this of the reply a Bombay municipal milk inspector gave to the kindly inquiry of an upcountry friend: 'the pay is small but the income is good'. And this was the general pattern of the processes of officialdom in the dominions of 'His Exalted Highness' the Nizam of Hyderabad in those days. Perhaps not *only* in that state, and maybe not in those days alone.

Every couple of weeks or so, depending on how remote and off-beat the survey localities were, we were obliged to surface from the wilds into 'civilization' and Hyderabad city for refitting—laying in provisions and supplies not procurable in the backwoods. During these breaks we usually stayed with brother Hasham and his family in their pleasant Saifabad home. Hasham was my eldest brother, eighteen years older than I, and the father of Suleiman, my bird-keeping partner in the early Khetwadi days. He had got married-off by our elders to the only daughter (Dilber-un-nissa) of a well-to-do family friend in Hyderabad at the early age of nineteen or so, while still studying law at Bombay. Soon after receiving his law degree he moved over to Hyderabad and set up a precarious legal practice, and the Khetwadi ménage lost personal contact with him thereafter. Suleiman was born a couple of years later and long before Hasham (Hashoobhai as we called him) had found his feet. Thus when Suleiman reached schooling age he was packed off to Bombay to the care of aunt Hamida Begam and uncle Amiruddin, who had more or less adopted and brought up Hasham himself as their own child. Hasham was a deeply religious man in the best sense of the term, never preaching to others and eloquent only by his own silent example. His reputation for honesty and integrity had become a byword in Hyderabad officialdom, and it is to his lasting credit that in spite of walls having ears—residences of important government officials were planted by aspiring or malicious rivals with snooping domestics—his record as a district judge, and later as a judge of the Hyderabad High Court, remained impeccable and unsullied throughout his service. He was not unsociable by nature, but he reserved his intimacies chiefly for the family circle and seldom had much intercourse with

outsiders except at a formal official level. For his own sake this was perhaps just as well, considering how luxuriantly the grapevine flourished in the Hyderabad climate of the time. Indeed so widely and well was his character known and appreciated—his unapproachability as a judge, and his integrity, uprightness and impartiality—that he was honoured by the Nizam, Mir Osman Ali Khan, with the title of Nawab Hasham Yar Jung during his lifetime, and by a self-composed poetical panegyric after his death, lauding his character and virtues—a mark of very exceptional royal favour. With the unorthodox qualities he possessed it was hardly likely that Hasham would ever have made a materially successful lawyer in the prevailing nawabi atmosphere of Hyderabad. Thus it was fortunate for him to get sucked into the nizam's judicial service fairly early in his struggling legal career.

Because of the great disparity in our ages and the fact of his being cut off so early from the Bombay household, I had less rapport with Hasham than with the rest of my brothers and sisters. Except for occasional school vacations spent in Hyderabad as children along with Suleiman and his younger brothers (two) and sisters (four), I hardly had occasion to know him at that juvenile age. But even then, and later as a grown-up, there was plenty of occasion to know a great deal of him. Hashoobhai was verily one of God's Good Men, and though our temperaments and beliefs and outlook on life were diametrically different, I have deep affection and the highest admiration and respect for him.

In 1931, at the time the Hyderabad survey was in the field, the *Journal* of the BNHS was publishing a series of articles on 'The Preservation of Wildlife in the Indian Empire' dealing with the different provinces and princely states individually. I was requested by the Society to contribute the section on Hyderabad State, since I was on the spot and had the opportunity and facilities for collecting first-hand data. Up to 1897 there was, it seems, no restriction as to tiger or any other shooting. According to the game regulations, introduced only in 1914, no hunting could be done by anyone in the state without a government permit, except by the nizam and his

family, and the Paigah nobles and *jagirdars*. But up till 1933 there was no Arms Act in the nizam's dominions, and the state was bristling with guns of every description. They were mostly vintage muzzle-loaders, it is true, but good enough for slaughtering animals at waterholes, which seemed to be the approved method of the poacher, judging from the number of rude *machans* on trees, and pits in the ground near the water's edge, wherever one came across a pool in the forest. I recalled that Captain A.I.R. Glasfurd in his book *Rifle and Romance in the Indian Jungle* (published about 1905)—a favourite and evocative reading of my youthful shikar days—had already remarked on the disastrous effect the unrestricted use of these unlicensed muzzle-loaders was having on the wildlife of the surrounding Deccan country even at that time. In spite of the belated game regulations, therefore, and with no regard by the poacher for season, age or sex of the quarry, the larger animals were disappearing rapidly, a trend that has unfortunately been accelerated by the advent of the jeep since World War II, the change from feudalism to democracy and the consequent all round loosening of control of arms and forest regulations.

My investigations showed that, by and large, the *muntazims* (game wardens) and watchers of the *shikargahs* or royal game preserves were a thoroughly corrupt and 'measly' lot. The information they supplied about local conditions and wildlife was seldom reliable, and it seemed conceivable that a good deal of the poaching—much of it by government officials, high and low—was tolerated by them either actively or through indifference and neglect. No wonder then that Hyderabad State, which in the early years of the nineteenth century included some of the finest tiger and other big-game areas in the country, had been reduced to such a sorry plight a mere hundred years later. A large majority of the state officials—from the taluqdar down to the lowly sub-inspector of police or revenue, including foresters themselves, as well as the numerous *vakils* (lawyers) that thronged the district courts, local businessman and the more prosperous shopkeepers—all claimed the status symbol of having shot at least one tiger, and many two or more. Even with a generous allowance for bravado and idle boasting, an

estimate of the enormous population of tigers the state must have held as recently as forty years ago makes comparison with the situation today depressing. Although the nizam himself did not hunt, the two elder princes were accomplished butchers. Around May 1935, soon after my survey, the then heir-apparent, Azam Jah Bahadur, and his party, in the course of thirty-three days' shooting from sybaritic *machans* fitted with a variety of 'home comforts'—including field telephones to report minute-by-minute progress of the tiger during a beat—killed thirty-five tigers, in addition to numerous bears, sambar, and other game in proportion, in the *shikargahs* of Pakhal, Mulug and others.

9

Interlude in the Nilgiris

The Hyderabad State Ornithological Survey was completed in April 1932. Having no fixed abode to retire to while awaiting the result of the negotiations between the BNHS and the Travancore-Cochin governments for a bird survey, we were happy, and indeed lucky, to have been offered by a family friend, Mrs Nundy of Hyderabad, her delightful holiday cottage, 'Mon Abri,' at the quiet little hill-station of Kotagiri in the Nilgiri hills. Till then I had had no experience of the South Indian evergreen rain and shola forests, and the opportunity of living in the Nilgiris for a few months by way of an orientation course for Travancore, as it were, was doubly welcome. The quiet interlude also permitted me to finalize my report on the birds of Hyderabad State which, in turn, helped materially in inducing other unexplored states to follow suit. Kotagiri fifty years ago was a charming but sleepy hill-station, the chosen habitat of a variety of Christian missions, of sects like the Seventh Day Adventists, and others, such as 'One by One Band,' whose names even we had never heard before. Many of the 'civilized' people one came across on walks were retired European missionaries of one brand or another, male and female, most of them old and doddering, who seemingly came up here only to die in comfort. In spite of all its sylvan peacefulness and alluring natural attractions of climate and scenery, Kotagiri was altogether too dull and lifeless a place for active young people to live in, except on a short holiday and for escape from the heat and dust of the plains.

The lack of stimulating, intellectual contacts had begun to

pall on both of us by the end of the second month; it was therefore providential that a chance visit to the government hospital for some minor complaint brought us in touch with the pleasant young medical officer-in-charge, Dr K.M. Anantan, a Keralite who had volunteered as an army doctor in Mesopotamia during World War I. He had retired as a Captain in the Army Medical Corps at the end of the war and gone back into the civil medical employ of the Government of Madras. The amusing doctor and his charming, active young wife—they, like ourselves, had no children—soon became our inseparable companions, and thereafter there was hardly any activity or pleasure that we didn't share together—jungle walks, bird-watching, picnics, motor drives, indoor games, and merry-making. At the end of each month Dr Anantan had to go to Ootacamund, some twenty kilometres away, to draw his salary. He had an ancient two-seater Morris Oxford with a dicky seat into which we squeezed ourselves. The drive to Ooty over the hill road involved many gradients too steep for the tired little car to negotiate without a great deal of coaxing, and at times even some physical aid. We made this an occasion for pleasurable birdwatching and picnicking in and around the beautifully laid out and maintained Botanical Garden, and for listening to the many funny stories and experiences of which the doctor had an inexhaustible supply. All the same, I was not at all sorry when intimation came from the BNHS that the Travancore Durbar had sanctioned a bird survey of the state and wanted to know how soon it could begin.

It was while living at Kotagiri that I had my first meeting with Ralph Morris, a coffee planter in the Biligirirangan hills of the then Mysore State, a first-rate naturalist and big-game hunter, and—later in life—a dedicated wildlife conservationist. His highly readable and perceptive accounts of shikar and natural history experiences in the South-Indian hills, which for some years around the period 1920-40 appeared regularly in the Society's *Journal*, were widely appreciated. Ralph and his very attractive, physically tough and highly competent wife, Heather, were frequent visitors to Kotagiri, to the latter's widowed mother Mrs Kinloch who lived in a lovely bungalow

on the edge of Longwood Shola. Tehmina and I and the Morrisses took to each other from that first meeting at Kotagiri, and they remained among our dearest and most treasured friends till they made their respective exits—Tehmina herself in 1939, Ralph in 1977 and Heather two or three years later.

Ralph and I had long known of each other's interests and activities through the *Journal* and by personal correspondence. When he heard of the impending Travancore bird survey, both he and Heather warmly invited us to spend a few days with them at their coffee estate prior to commencing the field work. He suggested Maraiyur in north Travancore as the most convenient point of entry from Kotagiri. That week or ten days at Honnametti enabled me, with Ralph's intimate knowledge of the South-Indian jungles, to work out a promising programme and itinerary for the survey covering all the various physiological features of the state fairly comprehensively. That delightful time in the Morrisses' comfortable patrician home in the heart of more or less primeval tiger and elephant-infested jungle is nostalgic, and also memorable for the intimate insight it gave us into the life style of a cultured European coffee planter in South India, and what it took in those near-pioneering days to make a successful and contented one: physical toughness, unrelenting hard work, dedication to a lonely jungle life cut off from social contacts and amenities, and complete self-sufficiency as jack of all trades—carpenter, mason, plumber, electrician, motor mechanic and general handyman. In addition, of course, Morris had to be a practical horticulturist with a good basic knowledge of field botany, plant diseases and insect pests. He had to have a good command of the local lingo, and have the ability to control a large labour force with tact and understanding to keep it ticking happily. Heather had all that it takes to be a good planter's wife—toughness, pride in her elegantly appointed, comfortable home, and complete self-reliance for the multifarious domestic chores, which included a working knowledge of home medicine, care and management of infants and milch cows, growing vegetables and gardening, and a genuine concern for the welfare of labourers and their families. She, like her husband, was enamoured of the peaceful

'care-free' (as she called it!) jungle life, and earlier on had also been a keen and adventurous big-game hunter—a sport for which the Biligirirangan and associated hills were famous.

Remembering Ralph Morris brings to mind a mystifying and inexplicable episode concerning him that occurred much later. In 1953 the Government of Jammu & Kashmir requested the BNHS to depute a team of two or three experienced conservationists to study the status of wildlife in the Dachigam and other sanctuaries (then 'game reserves') in the state, and advise them on their proper management. An obvious choice was Morris, but he was then suffering from a troublesome slipped disc, which brought on crippling, excruciating pain from time to time. However, he was greatly tempted by the opportunity to see the country and its wildlife and had haltingly agreed. We started from camp in Srinagar one morning on ponies when he was already in some pain, and I was wondering how he would stand the long and bumpy ride. We were walking our two ponies abreast when his horse put one foot into a rat-hole and stumbled, vaulting Ralph over its head and sending him flat on his back on the hard ground. I feared he had broken his back and that would be the end of the survey. Wonder of wonders! Ralph soon got up, rather shaken but with the pain completely gone and never to return!

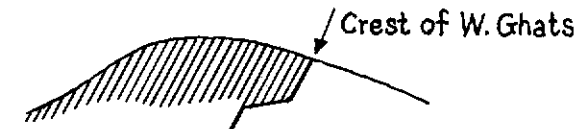
Of all my regional bird surveys between the years 1930 and 1950—which I regard as the most productive period of my career—perhaps the one that gave me the greatest satisfaction both as to the fieldwork and writing up its results was the ornithological survey of Travancore-Cochin which later provided the basis for my book *The Birds of Kerala*. Apart from the matchless beauty of the South-Indian hills, the southern extremity of the Sahyadri or Western Ghats, and the lushness and grandeur of their primeval evergreen forests, there was something special in much of their animal and plant life that stood out distinctly from the rest of the peninsula. The curious similarity between the fauna and flora of the higher hills of Kerala forming part of the southern Western Ghats complex (Nilgiri, Palni, etc.) on the one hand and the Eastern Himalaya, West China, Burma and Malaysia on the other, had

been remarked on by earlier naturalists. The two end-populations are separated often by more than 2,000 kilometres of very different terrain ecologically, and the problem is to explain this anomaly. The case of fish species inhabiting rivers and mountain streams in the two areas and nowhere in between is the most puzzling of all, since fish obviously could not have reached here without some kind of water interconnection. To my mind the most plausible explanation seems the one postulated after a critical study of the fish fauna and geology, geomorphology and climatology of the peninsula by the renowned biologist Dr Sundar Lal Hora in his 'Satpura Hypothesis', which assumes a one-time connection of the Eastern Himalayas with south-west India, westward over the Rajmahal hills gap and the Satpura mountain range, then southward down the Western Ghats to their southern extremity, and on into Sri Lanka before it was severed from the mainland. The connecting highlands have been worn down through the ages and the South-Indian populations are thus the residue of a once continuous distribution, now living in a sort of refugium. This problem lent a special fascination to my bird study in Travancore/Cochin.

The report of the ornithological survey, published serially in the *Journal* of the BNHS, drew gratifying reviews and comments in scientific periodicals and from individual scientists whose opinions I specially valued. Hugh Whistler wrote (8.1.1936): 'I was glad to see the tribute to your excellent field work in Travancore in *The Ibis*. Ticehurst is a very critical editor, and if he praises a thing it is praise worth having.' Ticehurst's favourable review was particularly gratifying to my ego because, since the Stresemann and Stanford Burma bird-collection episode in 1929, he had never been overtly cordial to me. Ernst Mayr, then Curator of Birds at the Natural History Museum, New York, said (27.1.1936): 'The most valuable part of your report is the notes on the life history and ecology of the observed species. I would like to congratulate you on your admirable treatment of the subject which I hope will set a standard for similar surveys.' Professor Kenneth Mason of the Geography Department, Oxford University (formerly Surveyor-

General to the Government of India) wrote back to Whistler, who had sent him the Introduction to my account of the ornithology of Travancore and Cochin, saying:

I found it of very great geographical interest, for the author has gone out of his way to base his conclusions on geographical factors 'influencing the bird life'. As far as I know the geography of southern India, he has all the salient points—and has used them to the best advantage. A minor point is that geologists, I believe, now consider that the crest of the old watershed lay to the west of Peninsular India, somewhere in the neighbourhood of where the Laccadive corals are now built, and that the Ghats are faulted by the subsidence of the whole range crest. Southern peninsular India is therefore less than an eastern half, and the present waterparting is east of the ancient one. It does not, of course, affect Salim Ali's argument, but in fact enforces it.



I have included this very useful information here since it may be new to many interested in the geotectonics of peninsular India, as it was to me.

E.C. Stuart Baker, the author of the second edition of the bird volumes in the Fauna of British India series, who was the Secretary of the British Ornithologists' Union at the time, after acknowledging receipt of 'the copies of your very excellent work on the Travancore birds', said: 'I must say I was very grieved at your little note about "inaccuracies being typical" of my work in the Fauna. I am afraid Whistler and Ticehurst have imbued you with their personal antagonism to me. . . . In 12 years I wrote 8 volumes, but I had to average 10 to 12 hours work daily to get it done.' In reply, after expressing great admiration for his achievement, which I truly felt, and regretting the grief inadvertently caused, I assured him that my criticism was made independently and in perfect good faith and not prompted by others. I added 'There can be no advance in scientific knowledge unless this [criticism of work] was so.' All of which shows that ornithologists are also human.

One of the prize specimens obtained in Travancore which was casually misidentified by me at the time as a Crested Hawk-Eagle, and at first sight by Whistler as Jerdon's Baza, proved on closer examination at the British Museum to be a Feathertoed Hawk-Eagle (*Spizaetus nipalensis kelaarti*), according to Whistler 'one of the rarest birds of prey in the world in collections, I suppose. The bird was quite new to me. Curiously enough Baza is a sort of miniature of it.' The specimen had come into my possession quite fortuitously: the bird was killed with a faggot of wood stacked as engine fuel by a fireman of the Cochin Forest Tramway at the hill-top terminal station, Parambikulam, as it swooped on some of his chickens. As I happened to be camping at Kuriarkutti a few miles down the line, and the man knew we were after birds, he just stopped the train in passing by our camp and handed the bird over. I must admit that because I thought it was just an ordinary Crested Hawk-Eagle and I was short of packing space for large birds, I was not exceedingly pleased at the time. However, it was too good a specimen to lose, and since the survey collection was particularly weak in birds of prey, I managed somehow, after much inward grumbling, to accommodate the skin, though it was a thorough nuisance each time it came to packing and repacking for a camp shift. I was therefore specially pleased that it had justified itself so well.

For richness and diversity of bird life Kerala stands, in my estimation—at least stood at the time of the survey fifty years ago—as undisputed No.1. There were certain localities in particular, for example Thattakad on the Periyar river in northern Travancore, which linger in my memory as the richest bird habitat in peninsular India I have known—comparable only with the Eastern Himalaya. Since the survey, and particularly since our Independence, I have visited Kerala every few years and been more and more depressed and scandalized each time by the mindless vandalism being perpetrated by successive state governments and crooked politicians in the devastation of virgin evergreen forests to settle repatriates, or for so-called 'development' projects such as dams for hydro-electric power and raw material for wood-based industries. Thattakad has

become a travesty of its former self, with most of the superb natural forest replaced by monoculture of commercial species to pander to industrial development, or drowned in the huge reservoir created by the damming of the Periyar river. Continuingly, some 1,500 hectares of virgin evergreen forest are being clear-felled every year to give way to eucalyptus, rubber and oil palm. Thousands of hectares of prime evergreen and moist-deciduous mixed forest in the Parambikulam area, memorable for the romantic Forest Tramway, have been clear-felled for teak plantation or drowned under the water-spread, while the ding-dong battle between conservationists and the Kerala government to save Silent Valley, imminently threatened with a similar fate, may only be temporarily over.

From an old household account book of my wife's, salvaged from miscellaneous junk, in which she had kept detailed figures of the Travancore-Cochin survey expenses, I notice with much astonishment and a sense of utter disbelief that for the entire five months of fieldwork in the two states the total expenditure came to Rs 2,458. This included two separate return train journeys from Bombay for the two of us and one servant, and considerable excess luggage. It also included meals for four people, the servant's pay, private bus transport for camp shifts, the daily wages of shikaris and jungle guides, and all other odds and ends. The salary, field allowance and train travel of the bird skinner, the cost of ammunition (Rs 9 per hundred .410 dust, and Rs 10½ of 20-bore short cartridges), preservatives and postage of specimen parcels, etc. were borne by the BNHS. The two state governments had together contributed Rs 4,500 towards the survey, so that on completion of the work I still found myself Rs 2,000 to the good. It seems truly unbelievable how much it was possible to accomplish in those days and with how little, and it is fortunate for Indian ornithology that so much unworked ground could be covered by the various regional surveys while I was available gratis, and time was not of the essence. With the present level of field researchers' salaries and the rocketing cost of goods and services, such unhurried in-depth surveys are unthinkable, and would be completely beyond the means of an unendowed institution like the BNHS.

10

Dehra Dun and Bahawalpur 1934-9

Four years after the return from Germany, when I still remained without a permanent job and home, we thought it was time to stop living like gypsies or inflicting ourselves on friends and relations, and to look out for a pleasanter, quieter and less expensive place to live than Bombay, yet not an entirely social and intellectual backwater. My brother Hamid, who on retirement from the ICS had settled down in Mussoorie, suggested Dehra Dun at the foot of the hill-station as just such a place, and we accepted his suggestion with alacrity. To the attractions I had dreamed of earlier there would now be the added one of living close to Hamid, who was not only my favourite brother but also my *beau idéal* of a rational, this-worldly human being, and one I greatly admired.

From my boyhood days, and long before I had ever set eyes upon them, I had a romantic craving for the Himalaya and often day-dreamed that in later life, if I ever got the option of choosing a place to settle in, it would most certainly be somewhere among the foothills of the Himalaya where I would have at my doorstep, as it were, all the things that mattered most to me—beautiful forests, magnificent scenery, good birding, trekking in the mountains and plenty of opportunities for game shooting and ‘naturalizing’. What could be more idyllic? A business trip to the Forest Research Institute, Dehra Dun in 1925, on behalf of my employers’ match factory at Bombay for information about suitable matchwoods, had given me my first

sight of the Himalaya and revived that cherished dream with redoubled longing. Through a kaleidoscopic shuffling of fate my dream had now come true, at least partially. Tehmina and I had spent five of the happiest years of our lives in Dehra Dun among loving friends and stimulating intellectual company and enchanting surroundings, and with a sense of fulfilment in my own case. These good times were cut short by a great personal tragedy in my life. After a comparatively unrisksy surgical operation Tehmina developed blood poisoning and died in July 1939. Now that she was gone I had a hard decision to face: to stay on or to migrate. My youngest sister Kamrunnisa—Kamoo for short—two years my senior—and her husband Hassan (son of my father’s elder brother Faizulhussain) lovingly insisted on my giving up living alone, and very kindly invited me to come to Bombay and share their beautiful home at Pali Hill, Bandra. Even up to that time Pali Hill was a quiet and delightfully green residential suburb.

I had never been enamoured of city life and the idea of my voluntarily returning to Bombay after our near-idyllic years in Dehra Dun was not appealing. Yet without Tehmina life in Dehra Dun had not been, and could never be, the same. The main considerations that decided my fate were, firstly, the loving offer of Kamoo and Hassan, who had always been particularly dear and close to us both, and the presence in Bombay of the Natural History Society with its excellent bird collection, library, congenial colleagues and other facilities for the continuance of my work. Leaving Dehra Dun was a painful wrench, but in retrospect I feel it was the correct decision and it has been largely responsible for whatever success I have achieved since then. The cloistered seminary-like atmosphere I enjoyed in the smooth-running and cheerful Hassan Ali household, and freedom from housekeeping and other tiresome chores and headaches, allowed me to devote all my time to ornithological work. I cannot thank Kamoo and Hassan enough for the affection and forbearance I unflinchingly received from them. I hope that they will accept the resulting recognitions it has brought to me and the family, and to the country, as a slight recompense and as a token of my gratitude to them.

It was in August 1934, while living in Dehra Dun, that I drew up a modest project proposal for research in Economic Ornithology. From quite early on I had felt that there were immense possibilities and potential for detailed studies on the food and feeding habits of birds in their bearing on our two basic industries, namely agriculture and forestry. This feeling was encouraged by the researches and publications of, and by my correspondence with, workers like Forbes, McAttee and Cottam in the Bureau of Biological Survey, USA, Collinge in the UK, and others in Germany, Japan and elsewhere. The proposal was submitted through Dr W. Burns, the Director of Agriculture, Bombay Presidency, for the consideration of the then 'Imperial' (now Indian) Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR).

In the prologue to the scheme I pointed out the vitally important role of birds in agriculture, horticulture and forestry in India which had not been recognized or appreciated; that their impact was of a dual nature, meaning that while birds could on the one hand be highly destructive to cereal crops and orchard fruit, they could on the other be highly beneficial in controlling the ravages of insect pests and other vermin such as rodents, since these largely constituted the food of many species, and exclusively of some. I suggested that in a country like ours, which leans so heavily on agriculture and forestry, their impact was of a very special significance and that since the economic status of one and the same species often fluctuated between beneficial and harmful—from hatching to adulthood and from season to season—it was essential for a meaningful assessment of a bird's economic status to study its entire life history and bionomics. In the case of species whose diet consists partly of vegetable and partly of animal matter, this was particularly important. Apart from the nature and quantity of the food consumed, which can usually but not always be determined by analyses of stomach contents in the laboratory, it is quite as important to know the bird's feeding habits, food preferences and behaviour, and its population dynamics, by methodical field study.

Soft-bodied insects are usually so mashed up inside a bird's

stomach that it is seldom possible to identify them. This difficulty can be substantially resolved by field observation of the feeding behaviour of the bird and the nature of its prey. Similarly, many species of birds are adapted for a diet of flower nectar, in the process of procuring which they effect cross-pollination by transferring pollen adhering to their head feathers, and are thus of great usefulness in the propagation of plants. Stomach examination of such birds will show no more than some colourless liquid and is unlikely to disclose the identity of the source (species of flower), unless the bird has been observed actually feeding from a particular flower. To establish the overall economic impact of a bird species in a given area it is also necessary to take periodical censuses of its local population—its biomass—and to acquire precise knowledge of its ecology, breeding biology and population dynamics.

All this implies a comprehensive co-ordinated study of the life history of the bird by a trained field ornithologist, assisted in the laboratory by an experienced entomologist, and a botanist capable of identifying seeds and plant remains. It also implies the ready availability of a representative seed collection and other comparative reference material of this type. Such research had been and is still carried out extensively in the UK and many other countries of Europe. In the USA the erstwhile Bureau of Biological Survey—a branch of the US Department of Agriculture—has accumulated a vast amount of information of sterling pragmatic value to agriculture and forestry, besides the purely scientific aspect. Mr W.L. McAttee, the Principal Biologist of the Survey, whose opinion on my scheme was sought, considered it 'very well conceived', and among other useful suggestions mentioned that rather than trying to show the controlling influence of birds on specific insect pests, which is seldom spectacular or clear-cut enough to be demonstrable, the economic argument for the protection of birds should rest on the known tendencies of their feeding habits in relation to the organisms.

How naively optimistic I was in imagining that the scheme would materialize shortly, or ever, became clear only when efforts had to be finally abandoned after two years of a seemingly

interminable ding-dong correspondence and statements and clarifications before individuals and committees galore. And this in spite of the strongest support the scheme had received from the BNHS and from Dr Burns and other influential members of the Bombay Provincial Agriculture Research Committee. The procedure in those days (it may be so today for all I know!) was chiefly on the principle of judicious 'back-scratching', or what may be regarded as a refined form of horse-trading. The various provinces each put up their various development or research schemes to the ICAR (the central Imperial Council of Agricultural Research) for funding. These were then scrutinized by an Advisory Committee representing the various provinces and miscellaneous 'experts'. If Bombay supported a Punjab scheme—in other words if Bombay scratched Punjab's back—there was a reasonable chance of the compliment being returned, and vice versa. This was the general plan of operation. My economic ornithology research scheme, after being tossed about a couple of times on various pretexts, finally got approved *in principle* but found seventeenth place on the priorities list of ICAR. Dr Burns, who had zealously supported and piloted the scheme from its conception through all its vicissitudes, wrote in disgust and after much previous bitter experience that since under the circumstances it was unpredictable when the scheme's turn for funding might come, if ever, it would be just as well for me to forget about it and start chasing a different hare. It was a sad disappointment, but not entirely unexpected from the way things had begun to look. The experience was an object lesson to me of the role of politicking in public affairs, even those of scientific and national concern. It is a wonder how any such schemes ever manage to scrape through the tortuous official corridors and legalistic hurdles, and past the manoeuvrings of the inevitable 'opposition' and all the tangled skeins of red tape at every step in their progress.

Hugh Whistler and I were both anxious to follow up the gratifying collection made in Jodhpur State in 1933 by one of the BNHS field collectors, V.S. Lapersonne, with a more comprehensive survey of the entire Rajputana desert, the bird life of which was imperfectly known. My sights were set on

Bahawalpur State as the next target. I was eager also to revive my association with the desert, remembered from the school vacations with my brother Hamid on his duty tours in Sind. The bird survey of Bahawalpur State in early 1939 was made possible through the personal interest of the British Resident of the Rajputana States Agency and one Mr Atkinson, a retired British Indian policeman, then employed as 'Shikar Officer' in the Ameer's government—both of whom were active members and supporters of the BNHS. Incidentally, Bahawalpur was the last of the field surveys in which Tehmina participated. Sadly, she died only a few months after it was completed.

The fat young Ameer had the reputation of being a consummate playboy, with all that it implies in the context of Indian princes. On being asked what had impressed him most during his 'finishing' grand tour of England as heir apparent a few years previously, he was reported to have answered 'The actresses' legs'! Some of his courtiers and hangers-on seemed to be around solely to pander to his extraordinary whims. One, who apparently held the portfolio of Pornography, upon learning I was interested in Mughul miniatures, specially of animals, drew me aside and as a mark of special favour to a special guest produced from a locker a number of Mughul and Rajput miniature paintings of which he said H.H. was particularly fond. As paintings they were exquisitely executed and finished, but they all depicted half-dressed princes (though still with bejewelled 'dastar' on their heads) and their ladies appropriately unclad, in ingenious and impossible positions that would put even Khajuraho in the shade.

It was the hospitable practice of the Bahawalpur government to treat all announced visitors to the capital as state guests for the first three days. After that they were expected to abide by the Guest House tariff. However, a uniquely naive feature of the state's hospitality was that guests were classified as First Class and Second Class. You remained in the dark about your status until you saw what was on your breakfast plate next morning. For, prominently displayed on the wall opposite the dining table, was the Key to the diagnosis. The notice had two columns listing clearly what a First Class guest should expect

for his meals, and what the other of lower status: items like '1st Class guest 2 eggs, 2nd Class guest 1 egg. 1st Class guest 2 toasts, 2nd Class guest 1 toast'—and so on down the menu. It was an unambiguous but rather brutal way of making you see yourself as the state saw you. It was therefore some relief to find two eggs each on our tray next morning!

The Bahawalpur survey provided excellent opportunities for looking a bit more closely into the problem of the camouflaging coloration of desert animals—a subject that has always fascinated me. Meinertzhagen, who had made a special study of desert birds and life conditions in African and Asian deserts, had postulated with sound supporting evidence that the density of humidity in the atmosphere controls the amount of ultraviolet radiation penetrating to the earth and all life thereon. The very low humidity in the desert allows a higher percentage of ultraviolet rays to come through, whereas saturated air greatly impedes this process. Thus the greater the exposure to ultraviolet radiation the greater the paleness (as in the desert soil and the animals on it); conversely the less the ultraviolet radiation the darker the soil and the animal inhabitants thereon. It would seem that the same factor or factors that make the desert soil pale coloured are also responsible for making its inhabitants desert coloured and less visible in their surroundings. After drenching in a chance rain shower, I observed that the sandy coloration of desert birds, like the Desert Finch-Lark and the Desert Courser, darkened to exactly the same shade of brown as the sodden soil upon which they found themselves. The birds, whose pale sandy coloration was of obliterative value to them in an environment of pale dry desert sand, now enjoyed the same advantage when the soil was rain-sodden and considerably darker. This tends to support Meinertzhagen's suggestion that it may be the same common factor that is responsible both for the similarity in coloration of desert animals and their environment. I felt gratified when, after reading the Bahawalpur report, Meinertzhagen wrote to me: 'I was much interested in your observation on the effect of rain on plumage. It is curious how these obvious little truths get overlooked, and I think there might be a great deal in what you say. I hope you will allow me to use the idea in my Morocco paper.'

Afghanistan

Some time in 1935 my ornithologist friend Hugh Whistler wrote to me from England that Colonel R. Meinertzhagen, the noted British ornithologist, was planning a collecting trip to Afghanistan and was on the lookout for a companion to help him with the birds. Whistler asked if I would be prepared to go. I said I would be only too happy, since Afghanistan was an adjoining area to our own, yet so little known ornithologically. However, I said that as my own particular interest was ecology and I would not enjoy skinning birds etc. all the time, additional help would be needed. Whistler cautioned me: 'He is a great stickler—and rightly so—for the perfect preparation of all specimens in whatever branch of science, so you would need to keep a careful eye on the skimmers.' The expedition didn't come off till 1937 as Meinertzhagen was preoccupied with another one in Kenya in 1936.

Richard Meinertzhagen was one of the most colourful, original and, in many ways, likeable characters that ornithology introduced me to. As an officer in the British army he had spent most of his military service in East Africa. His exploits as a soldier and big-game hunter and ornithologist make fascinating reading in his *Kenya Diary* and the several other books he wrote about Kenya and Tanganyika under colonial rule. He had a passing acquaintance with India, where he had done temporary stints of service and convalescence during the First World War. When asked if he had managed to pick up any Hindi or Urdu while in India he replied that he had only learnt the useful term *sooar ka bacha* (swine), which he had encoded

as 'SKB' and frequently used in private conversation when referring to 'opposition' folk. He was a man completely devoid of sentimentalism and impervious to personal danger, and almost so to physical pain.

In one of his exploits in Africa while a young lieutenant, accompanied by six askaris against the rebellious Nandi tribe, he crawled into the Laibon's (chief's) village at night and captured the Laibon. He was removing the chief when a large force of warriors attacked. Meinertzhagen warned them that unless they withdrew immediately he would be compelled to shoot the captive. As they continued to advance threateningly, and there was imminent danger of himself and his small force being overwhelmed, he coolly raised his revolver and shot the man dead, an action that won him a DSO for gallantry and led to the unconditional surrender of the tribe.

Another of his oft recounted daredevil exploits was during the Middle East campaign in World War I. He rode out all by himself to a Turkish camp that was reported to be preparing a massive attack on a thinly defended British position which would most certainly have been overwhelmed. According to a deliberately planned strategy to mislead the enemy, Meinertzhagen carried with him a despatch case containing a fake plan of a major British offensive in an entirely different sector. As he came in sight the sentries raised the alarm and a fusillade started. He spun round and started the retreat at full gallop, with the Turkish bullets whizzing by, raising the dust all around. In the hasty retreat he contrived to drop the despatch case containing the 'secret' document. He managed to get back safely to the British lines but the ruse worked and the Turks were successfully foxed. They redirected their forces in accordance with the intercepted secret intelligence, and the British position was saved from being disastrously overrun.

Meinertzhagen narrated to me how at one stage in the Middle East campaign his job was to fly over Mesopotamian villages along with a pilot and drop propaganda leaflets to the 'oppressed' local population, assuring them of British altruism in fighting the Turks for *their* liberation. The aircraft used for the purpose was a frail looking single-engined two-seater biplane with

linen-stretched wings. At the air base the young devil-may-care pilot started piling into the plane bundle upon bundle of the propaganda leaflets until even RM, silently watching, felt slightly perturbed. Finally, when perturbation began to give way to mild alarm, he casually enquired of the man how much load they were supposed to carry. The pilot looked back amused and nonchalantly quipped 'O they will decide that at the inquest' as he merrily continued stacking bundle upon bundle till the plane could hold no more!

Meinertzhagen seemed to be as indifferent to physical pain as to personal danger. While we were collecting in a reedy marsh near Kabul, he, wearing khaki shorts with legs uncovered, accidentally stepped on a barb-pointed reed which broke off, leaving about three-quarters of an inch of its length within his flesh. Regardless of this, he continued splodging through the marsh while his blood flowed freely. Finally, after some persuasion, he agreed to return. As he was limping back to the car to get back and have the barb removed by the embassy doctor, he noticed a Bearded Vulture—a wanted species—some 300 yards away in a different direction. Ignoring the projecting reed and the flowing blood he limped up to the bird and shot it before getting back to the car.

Following our first meeting at Bombay where he arrived on 11 February 1937, Meinertzhagen's meticulously kept diary, which he kindly permitted me to read 'At your risk(!)' shortly before his death, when our earlier shaky contact had ripened into abiding friendship, says 'I then went on to the Bombay Natural History Society where I met Prater and Sálím Ali. I was favourably impressed by the latter and liked what I saw of him. It is as well if we have to travel together for the next few months. He seemed intelligent, but is hideously ugly, not unlike Gandhi.'

For the additional help in skinning birds I selected N.G. Pillai, who had been seconded to my Travancore bird survey in 1933-4 by the Trivandrum museum. Pillai was a competent zoologist, a good worker, and above all a soft spoken, gentlemanly individual who I knew would get on well in a mixed party of imponderables. His only failing was that he was

perhaps too meek and mild for this Afghanistan set-up, on account of which he had sometimes to pay in petty humiliations. Besides Pillai, I had hired as skinner a local Christian scamp named Dyson from Dehra Dun. I knew Dyson from several previous expeditions as a congenital shirker and malingerer. But he was a useful drudge and a good worker if one kept twisting his tail, which I was sure Meinertzhagen was capable of doing, and more. In addition to these two we had with us a burly, handsome Pathan 'bearer', picked up en route in Peshawar. He was a competent man who had worked with foreigners before and knew the ways of the sahibs (for which he undisguisedly didn't much care!). Meinertzhagen had asked me to look out for a suitable botanist to take along with us on the Afghan expedition. A competent young student, K.N. Kaul, was recommended by my friend Birbal Sahni, F.R.S., then Professor of Botany at Lucknow University. Meinertzhagen interviewed Kaul, was well impressed but finally turned him down, I couldn't understand why. I know the reason now. The relevant entry in his diary says: 'Lucknow 8.3.1937. A young Hindu student, Kailash Nath Kaul, geologist [*sic*] wanting to accompany me to Afghanistan. He is a young man, nice mannered and intelligent, but I am a little doubtful whether I can stomach two seditionists for three months all day and every day. Salim is a rank seditionist and communist, so is Kaul (a brother of Jawaharlal Nehru's wife) and it would probably end in disaster.'

We had hired a rickety old open Chevrolet truck in Peshawar for the journey to Kabul, and into it we piled our tents and camping gear, specimen boxes, stores, rations and personal baggage. The Sikh driver, Meinertzhagen and I sat on the front seat; Pillai, Dyson, the Pathan bearer, the cleaner, and one or two nondescript hangers-on, rode with the luggage behind. It was early April and the winter snow had just started melting. The untarred mountain road was slushy and with numerous hairpin bends and fearsome vertical drops of hundreds of feet on the *khud* side. The Sardarji at the wheel turned out to be a veritable Jehu. He revelled in cutting corners at speed and skidding his vehicle round greasy bends in spite of repeated

remonstrances, and kept our fingers crossed and hair on end. We got to Kabul after dark, rather shaken but thankful that the ordeal had ended. The journey through the Khyber Pass to Jalalabad and on to Kabul took two days. Thanks to the hospitality of the British Minister in Kabul (Colonel Sir Kerr Fraser-Tyler), we were lodged in the luxurious Legation Building (built with Indian government money) which, at that time, must surely have been one of the grandest of its kind anywhere in the world (all to uphold the prestige and majesty of the Raj, no doubt), and it was perhaps more lavishly appointed than any international 5-star hotel today. Our entire expedition in the country north of Kabul as far as the Oxus river (the boundary of the USSR) lasted about eight weeks. It happened during the regime of Nadir Shah who had displaced the legendary upstart Bachcha-e-Saqqa who had earlier displaced the all-too-hastily reforming zealot king Amanullah. The Afghan government was hospitably co-operative throughout, and had even assigned a *mehmandar*—a sort of liaison officer—(easy-going, comfortable-shaped) to travel with our party and help clear all official and other hurdles, procure local assistance and supplies, and generally to see to it that we had complete freedom to move about in the countryside. And, as Meinertzhagen so aptly put it later, 'these many duties he carried out with indolent efficiency'.

My experience of the type of Englishman one normally came across in the heyday of the Raj was that he was a bully where one lower in the 'peck order' was concerned. Indians as a rule are too mild and submissive and thus lend themselves readily to being bullied. Another peculiarity of the British character I have found is that if you stand up to the bully and hit back, you command his respect. So it has been with me and so it was with Meinertzhagen. One of his biographers has described him as 'physically a powerful, violent and ruthless man'—a description which, happily, is only partly true. Though possessed also of many admirable qualities, he had a distinct streak of the bully in his make-up and could be unreasonable to the point of brutality at times. Due to his excessive meekness, Pillai was a perfect foil for a bully and he lived in obvious terror of

Meinertzhagen because, in the latter's estimation, Pillai could do nothing right or in the way it should be done—neither could I, as I later discovered from his diary—and I had often to intervene when the hectoring got too far.

As it happened, Meinertzhagen had brought out with him two small tents of green Willesden waterproof canvas which had evidently been his camping companions for many years in Kenya, and which he loved dearly. So dearly indeed that he would trust no one to put them up or take down but himself. One day, on a greasy road after a rainstorm, our expedition truck driven by the Flying Sardarji skidded and turned over on its side, catapulting all the kit from the roof into a roadside canal. It had all to be fished out as soon as we managed to extricate ourselves. Among the lot were the precious tents which got thoroughly soaked. As it was late evening and help to straighten the truck was not available, we decided to bivouac in an adjoining meadow and the tents were opened up and pitched. It continued drizzling all night so that the wet tents were wetter in the morning. The *mehmandar* who had gone off at dawn to fetch help from a village a couple of miles away had returned and the truck was back on its wheels once more. The wet tents were hurriedly taken down and rolled up in that condition and we reached our next dak bungalow, where they would not be needed, at 9 on a fine, sunny morning. Meinertzhagen and I set off immediately to explore the area and collect, leaving Pillai and the rest to set up camp. When we returned after a couple of hours Meinertzhagen found his beloved tents opened up and spread in the sun. The morning's collection may have been disappointing or the hurriedly bolted breakfast may have disagreed with his inside, I cannot tell, but the sight of those tents suddenly sent him off the deep end into a paroxysm of insensate rage.

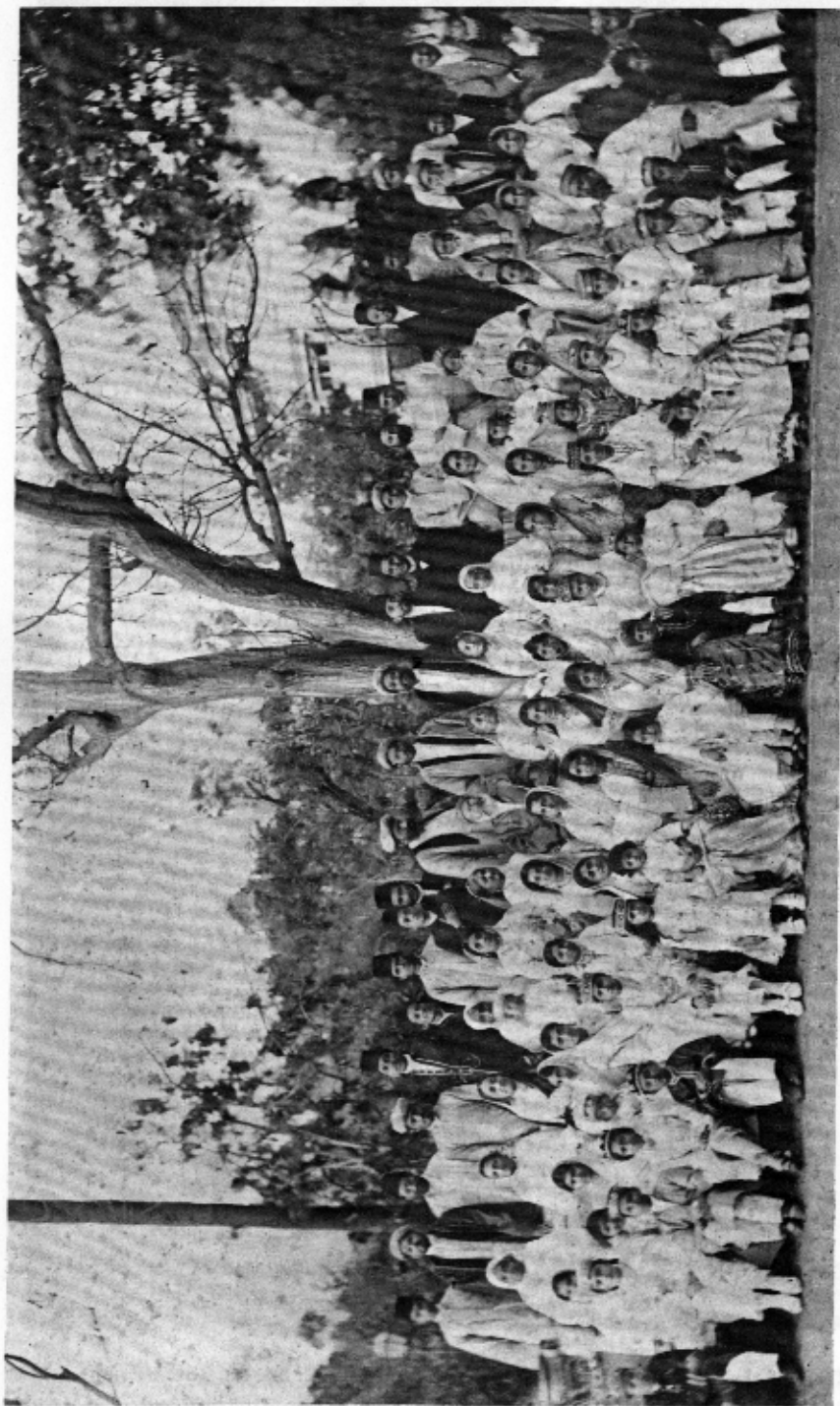
Pillai was called up and mercilessly barked at: Who asked him to meddle with his tents? Why did he touch them without instructions? And so forth and so on. I could no longer remain a silent spectator of this extraordinary exhibition of unjustified bullying and felt compelled to protect the poor terrified Pillai who was struck dumb with fright. I told Meinertzhagen that he



1. Father and Mother with five. Four more to come! c. 1889.
(Photo by Ibrahim Ahmed)



2. Two of the five, plus the 'four more to come', 1902. SA on stool at right.
(Photo by Shamsuddin Lukmanji)

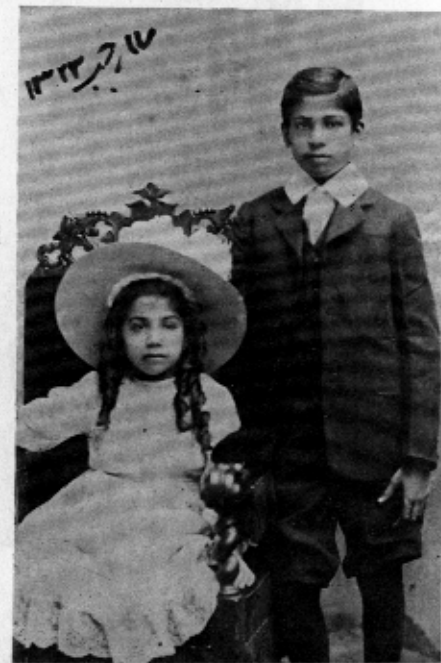


3. 'Gathering of the Clan' at uncle Badruddin Tyabji's Somerset House estate, Warden Road, Bombay, 1902. A traditional annual fixture. SA in middle of front row in black *sherwani*. Tehmina seventh from right in second row from top; the little girl in cap and curls.



4. At Khetwadi, with brother Hamid and sister Kamoo. c. 1905

5. Tehmina and her brother, Sarhan, in London, c. 1905 or 6.
(Photo by W. Whiteley Ltd., photographers)

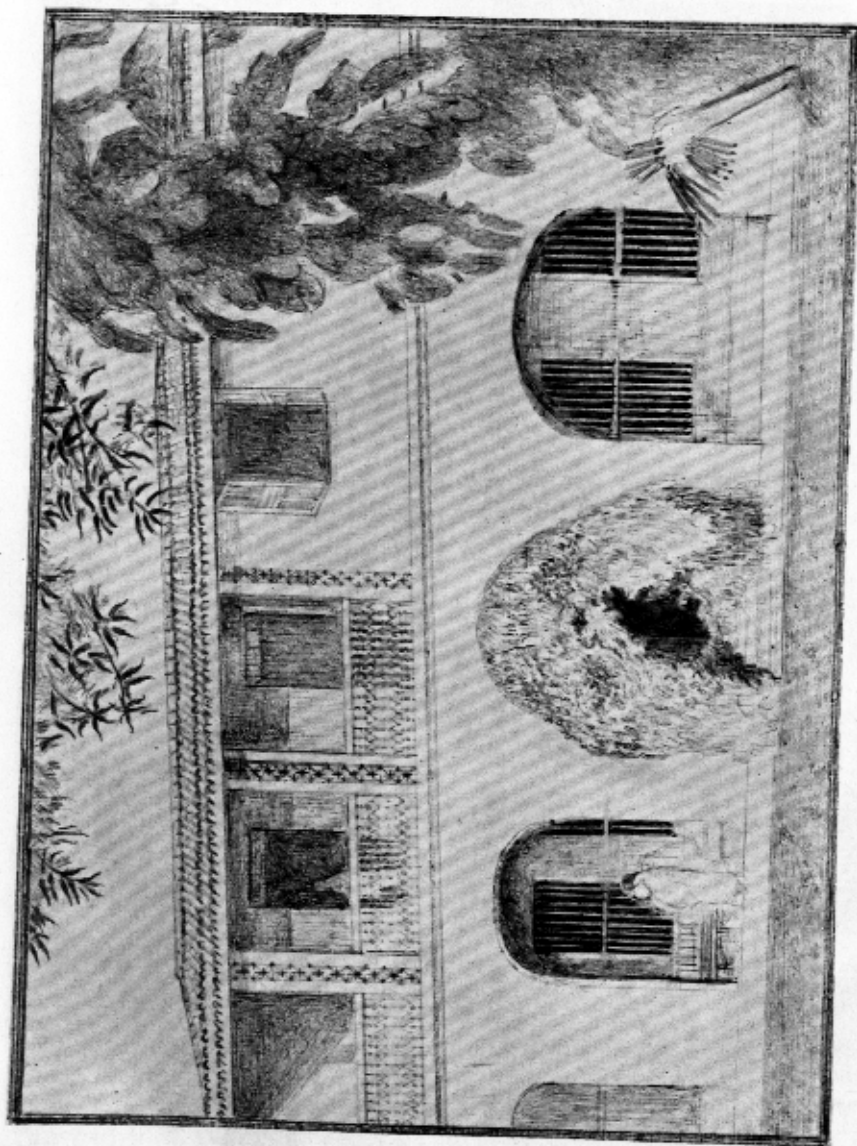


6. SA, c. 1910, in Hyderabad (at Hashoobhai's).



7. Amiruddin Tyabji (father/uncle), August 1910. (Photo by Shamsuddin Lukmanji)





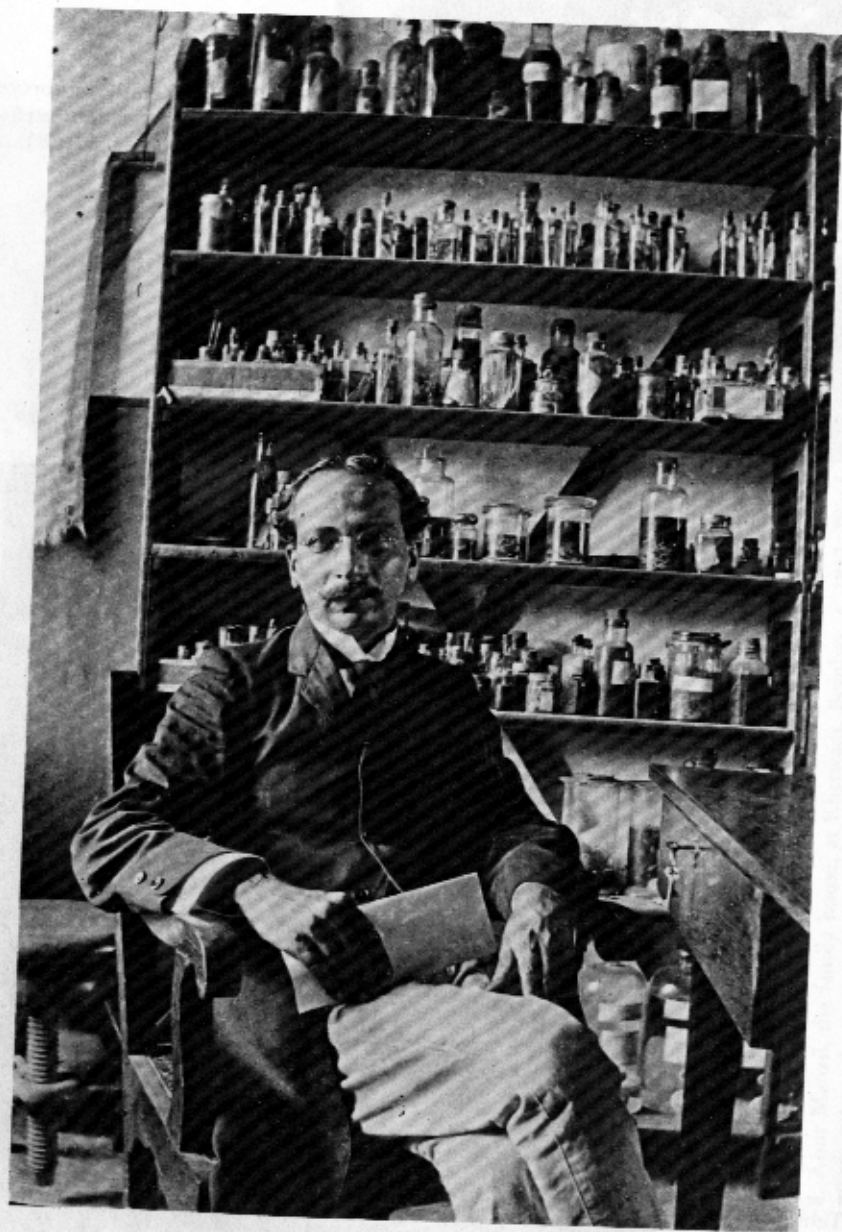
8. Amir Manzil, the family house, at Khetwadi, Bombay, c. 1912. Window (top right) of 'maternity ward', where the entire series of us, five brothers and four sisters, were born between 1878 and 1896.



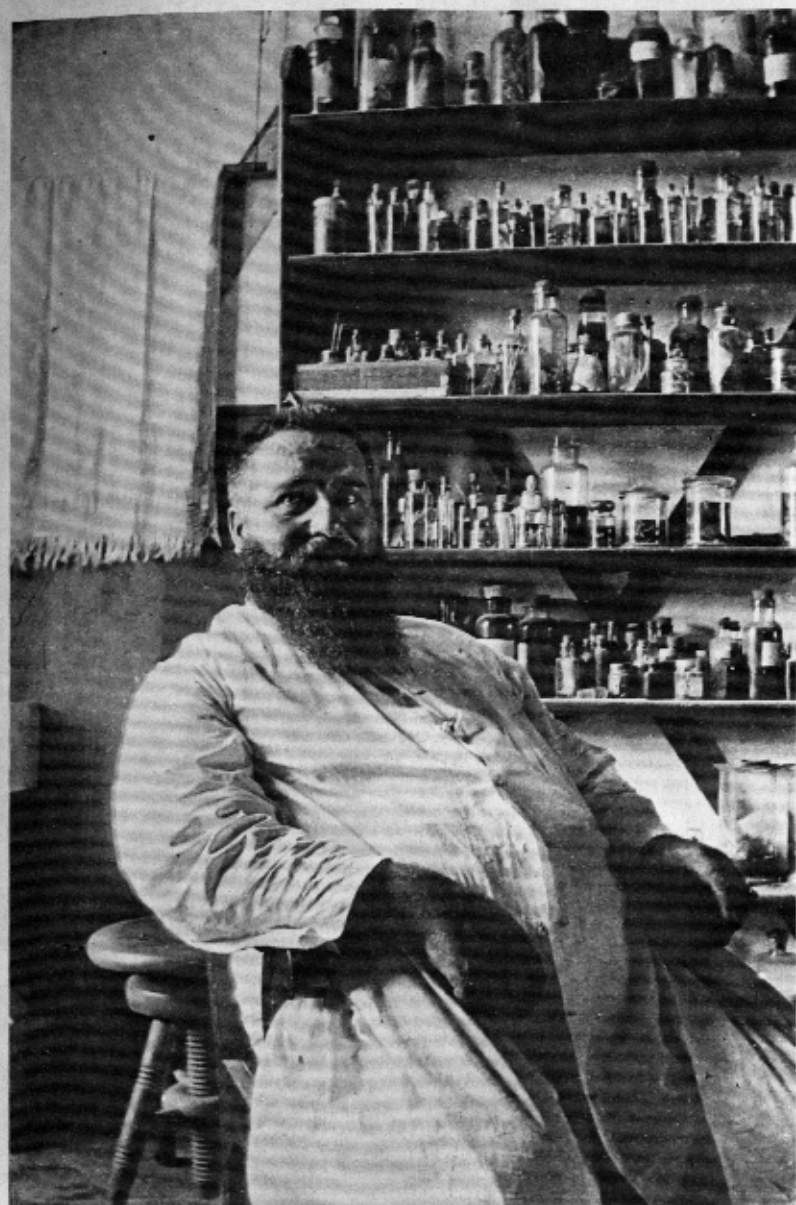
9. On the 'Zenith' motorcycle, with Jabir (pillion) and N.P. Gandhi (sidecar). Tavoy, July 1916.



10. Tehmina at her father's rented flat in Adenwala Mansion, Chowpati, Bombay, 1917.



11. My biology teacher at St. Xavier's College, Prof. J.P. Mullan, 1918.



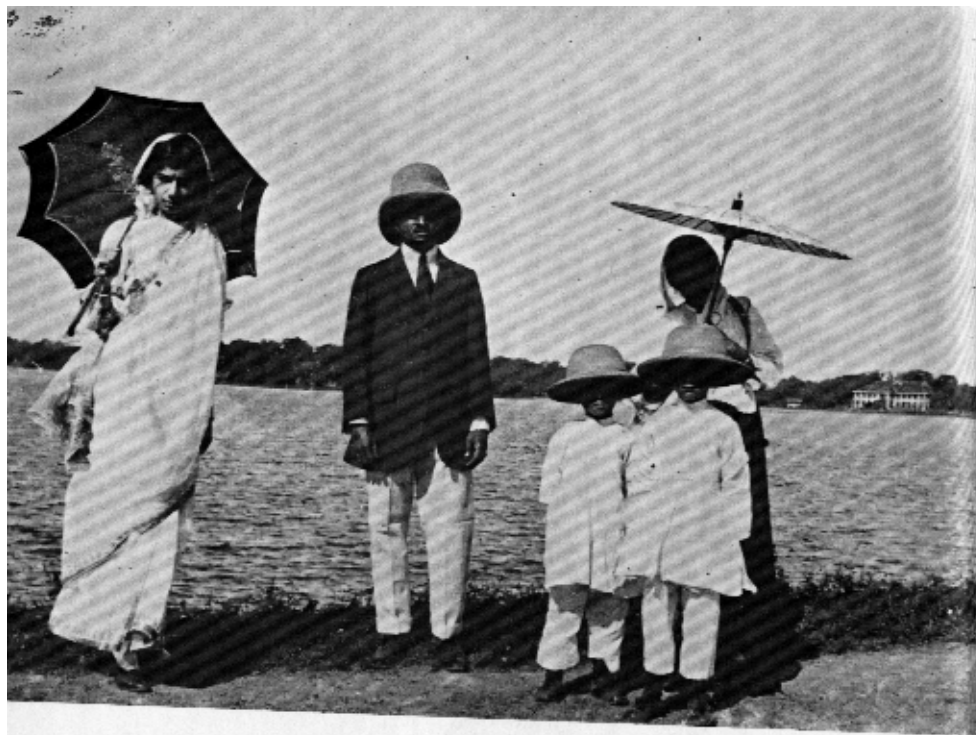
12. Rev. Fr. Ethelbert Blatter, S.J., an inspiration to biology, 1918.



13. Hugh Whistler, c. 1917.



14. Tehmina, Jabir, Kamoo, SA, Saad, Safia. Tavoy, 1920.

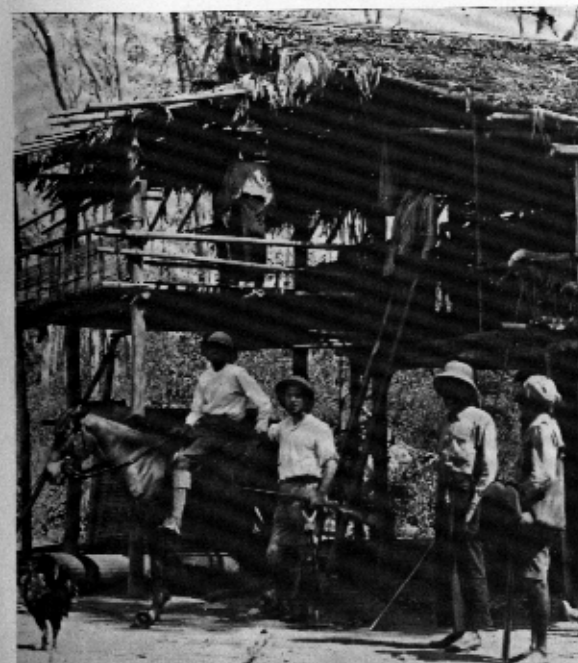


5. Royal Lakes, Rangoon, 1919. Tehmina, Aamir, Akhtar with Nadir and Ahsan (aged c. 6).

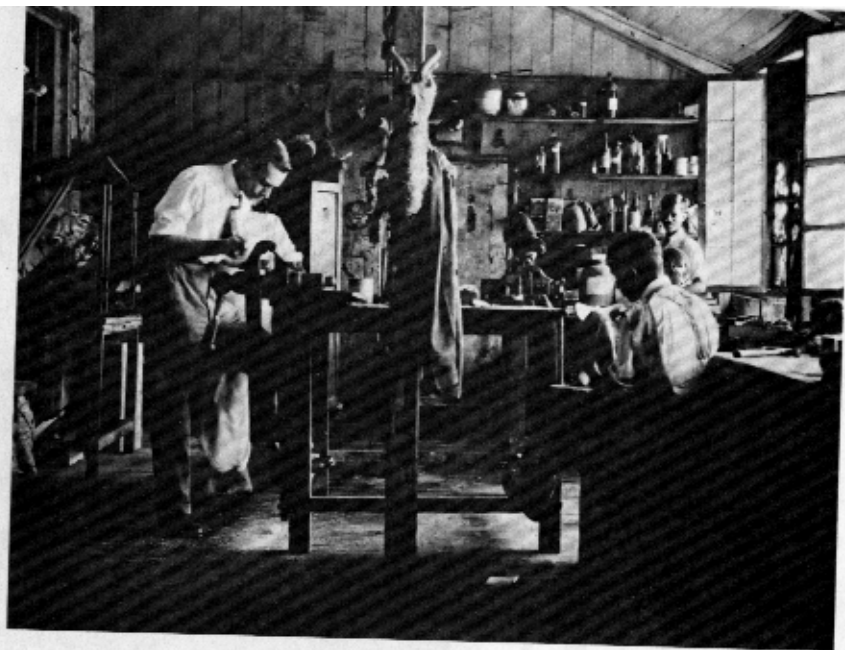


16. At the cottage in Civil Lines, Tavoy, 1922.

17. The evergreen optimist,
B. Ribbentrop. Tavoy,
1922.



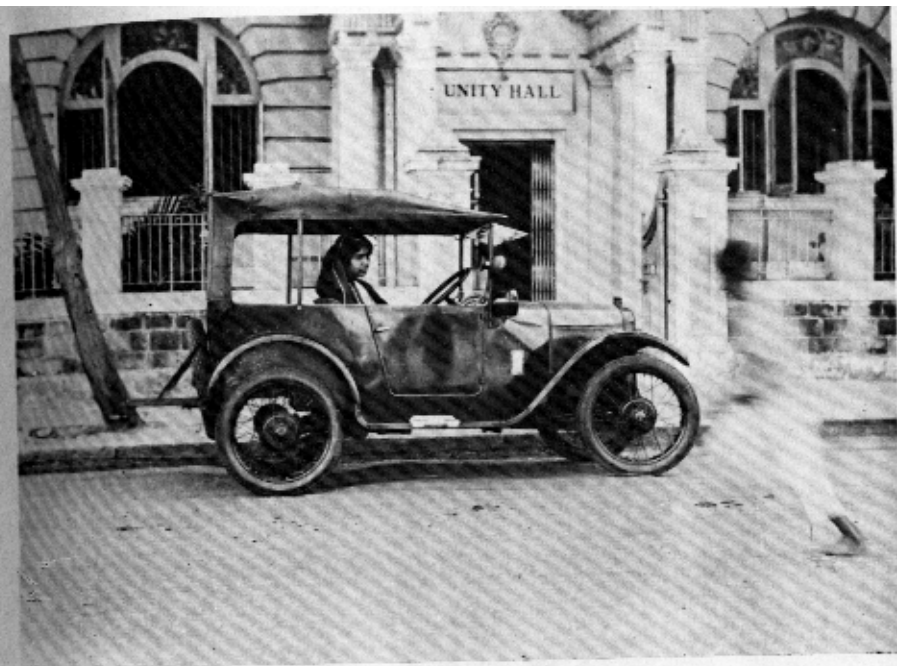
18. Timber camp hut,
Kyaukmedoung, Tavoy, 1922.
Jamsetji (on pony), Ribbentrop, F
(manager).



19. BNHS's taxidermy laboratory at Phipson's. McCann at work, 1926.



20. Bullocks extricating 'Jane' from difficulties, October 1927.



21. Tehmina and 'Jane', the Austin Seven, 1927.



22. Tehmina and 'Jane' with 'dead deer'. Solapur, 1928.



23. My guru—Prof. Erwin Stresemann. Heligoland, October 1929.



24. 'Latifia', Kihim. Tehmina and Farhat, c. September 1930.



25. Hyderabad Survey. Camp Teppal Margoo, Uttoor, Adilabad district, 1930.



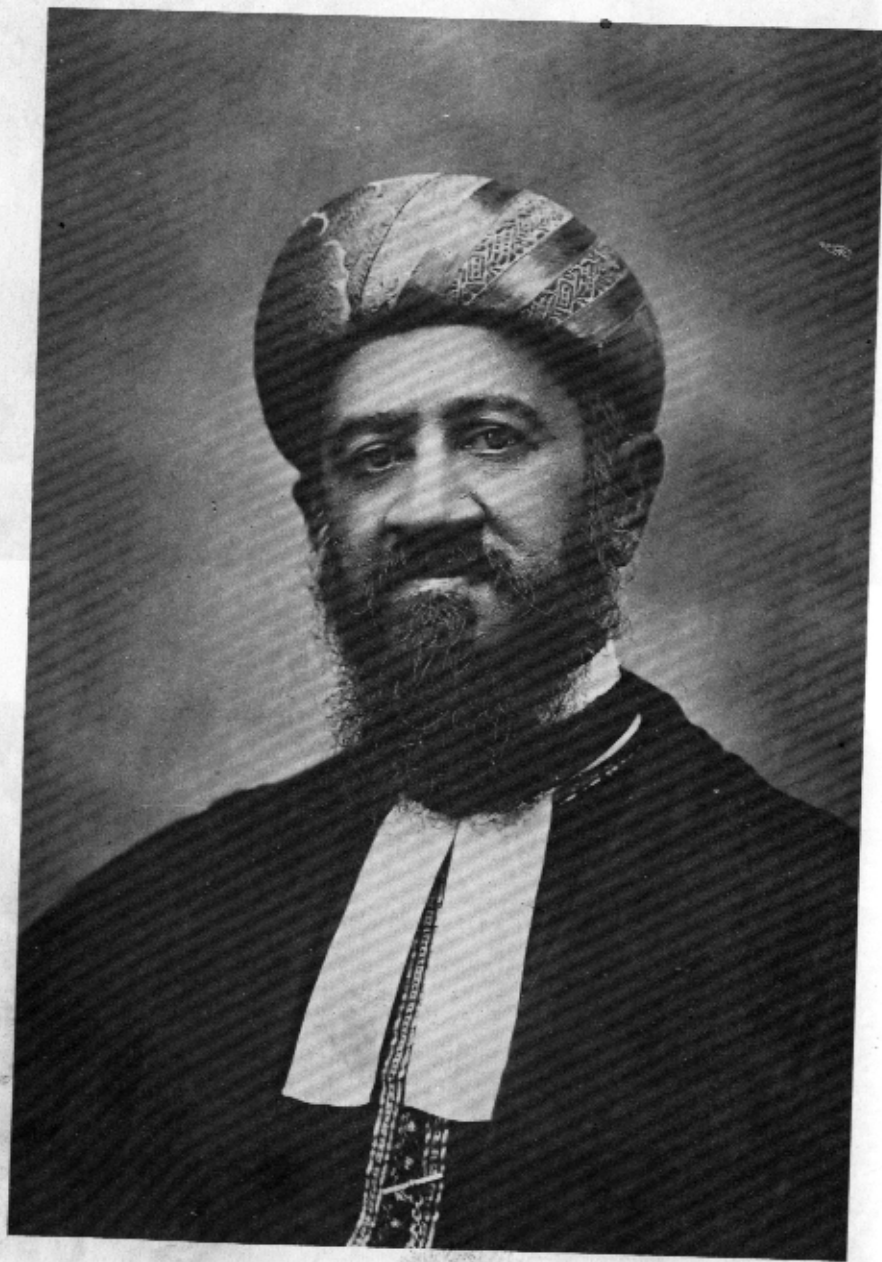
26. Collector's duty tour, camp in Kolaba district, 1931. Hamid, Sharifa, Tehmina.



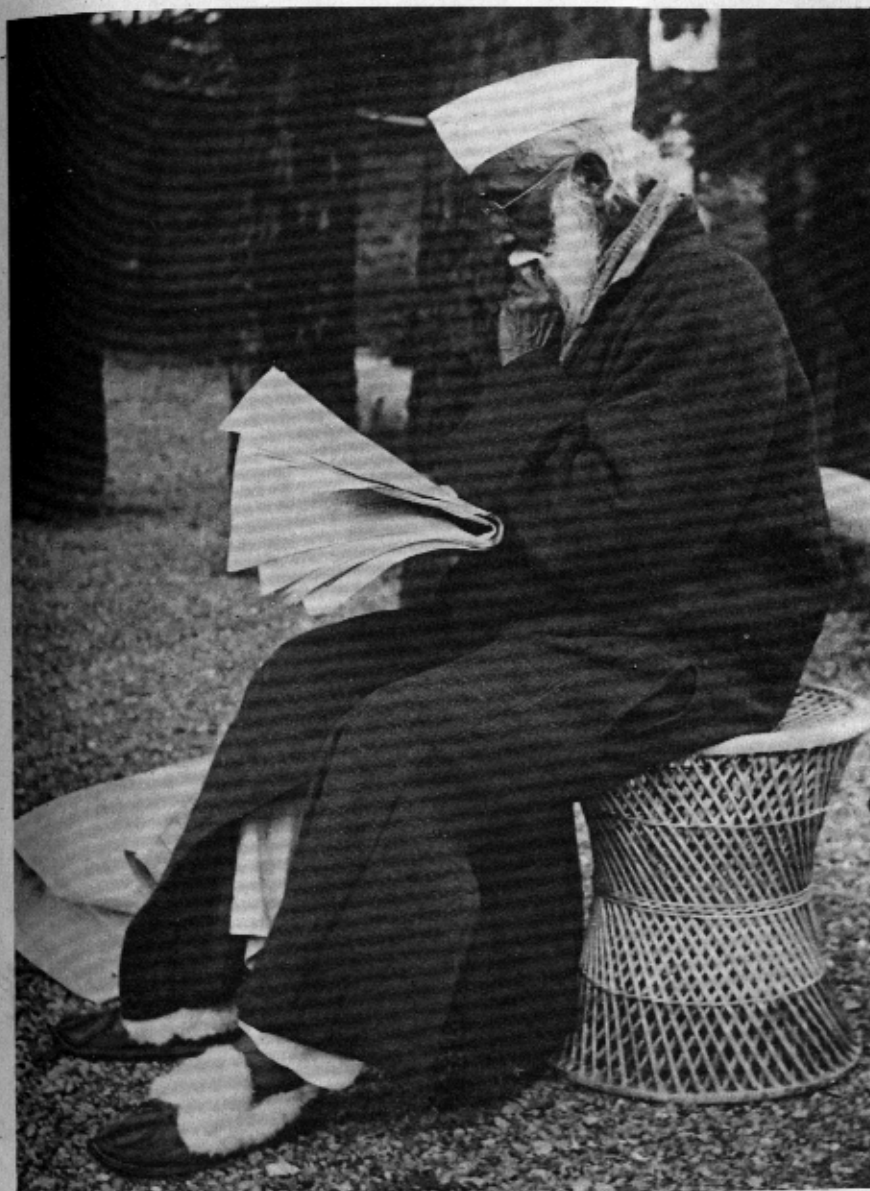
27. Jungle transport. Hyderabad State Ornithological Survey, 1931.



28. V.I.P. Coach, Cochin Forest Tramway, 1933.



29. Eldest brother Hasham Moiz-ud-din—Nawab Hasham Yar Jung Bahadur, c. 1946. On retirement as a judge in the Nizam's High Court, Hyderabad.



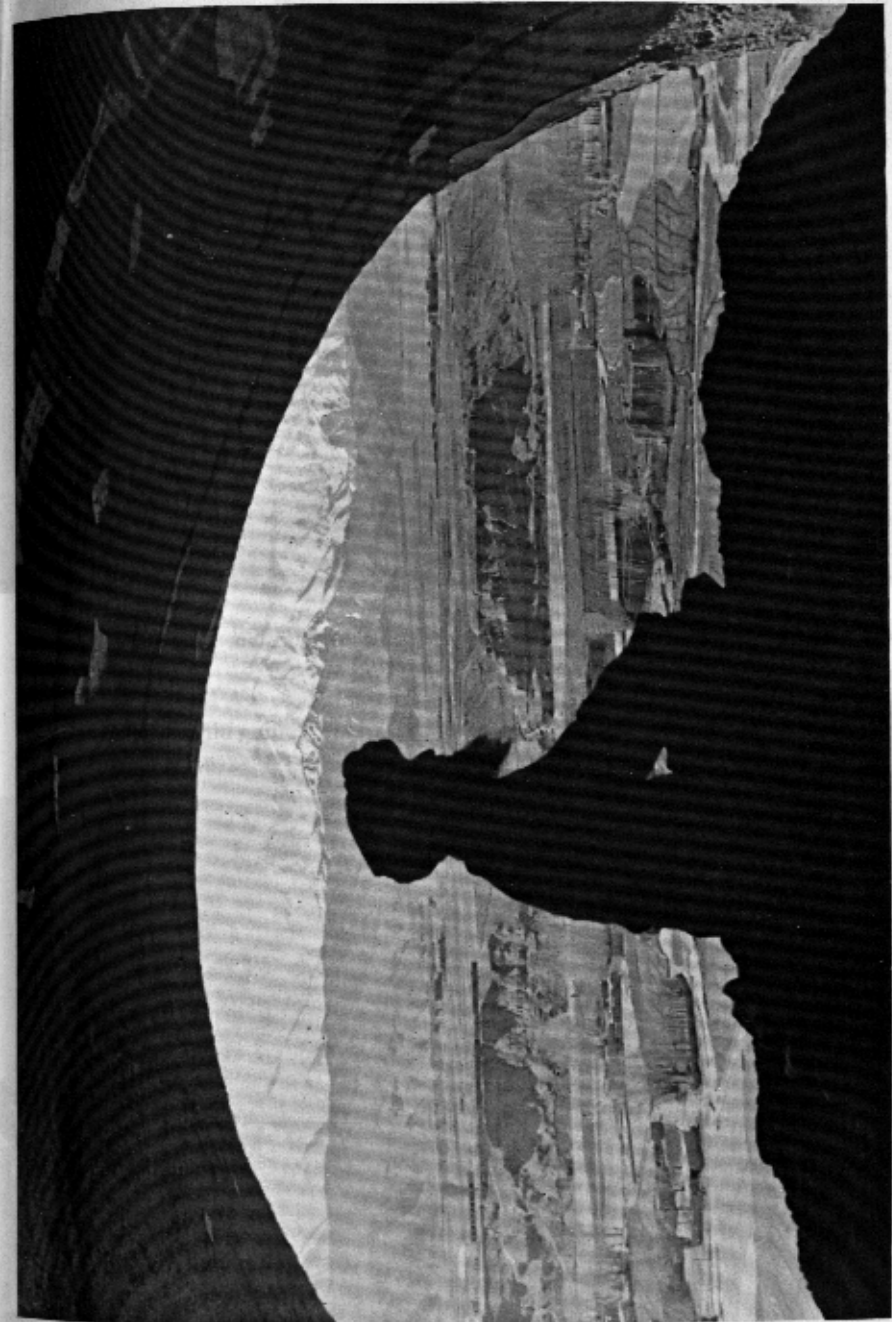
30. Abbas Tyabji (uncle). Mussoorie, c. 1935. (Photo by Nadir Tyabji)



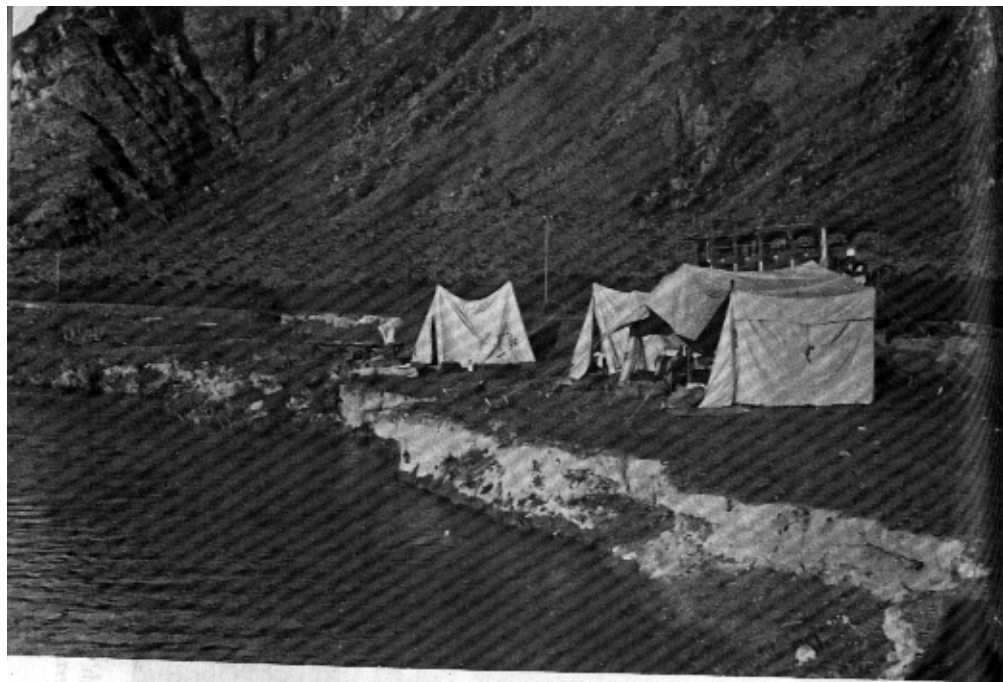
31. At the Ghana, Bharatpur, March 1937.



32. Sahebzada Saiduzzafar Khan on 'Noorunnissa', with his daughter Hamida on 'Noorkhan'. Dehra Dun, 1936.



33. On the head of the big Buddha, Bamian. Looking south towards Koh-e-Baba, Afghanistan, April 1937.
(Photo by R. Meinertzhagen)



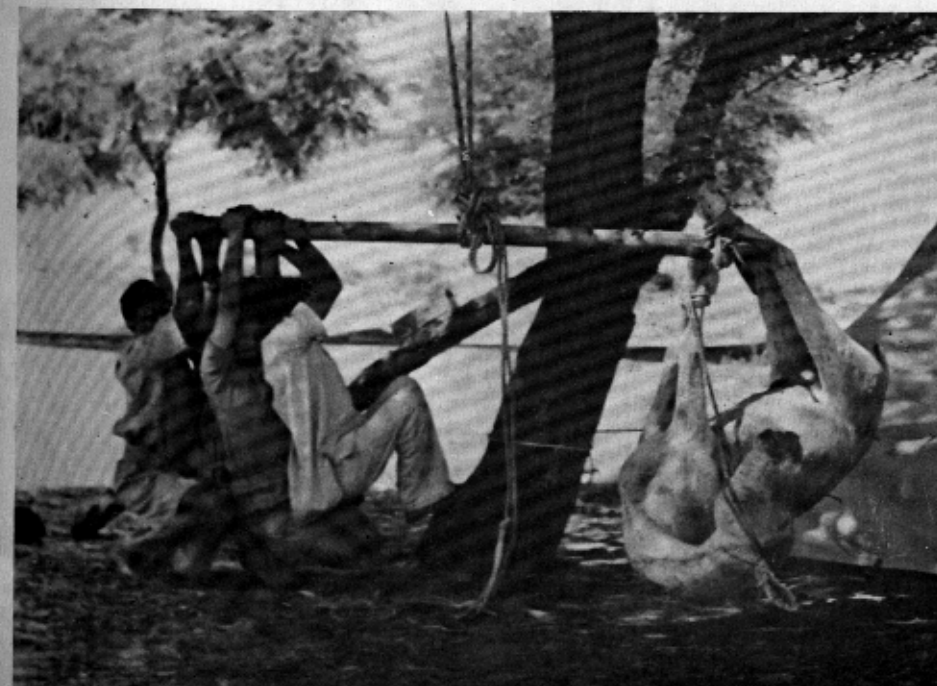
34. Bivouac by Surkhab River after the lorry accident. Afghanistan, May 1937.
(Photo by R. Meinertzhagen)

35. The Mehmandar buying cotton in the weekly bazaar, for stuffing birds. Dana village, Afghanistan, May 1937. (Photo by R. Meinertzhagen)



36. Bound for tern breeding islet off Gorai, near Bombay, 1943.

37. Wild Ass *vs.* Domestic(s)—DeSouza, Laurie Baptista, Ibrahim—weighing in the field. Pung Bet, near Adesar, Kutch, c. 1943.





38. Sir Peter Clutterbuck, mounted for Flamingo City. Great Rann of Kutch, 1945.



40. Bastar Survey, 1948. Before the days of the four-wheel drive. The station wagon in trouble.



39. Arthur Foot and his wife, Sylvia—"The Feet"—were among our closest Dehra Dun friends ever since Arthur came as the founding headmaster of the Doon School in 1935.



41. Greeted by David and Elizabeth Lack on arrival at the 1950 International Ornithological Congress, Uppsala, causing wonderment among some delegates at my timing, having 'ridden out all the way from India'.



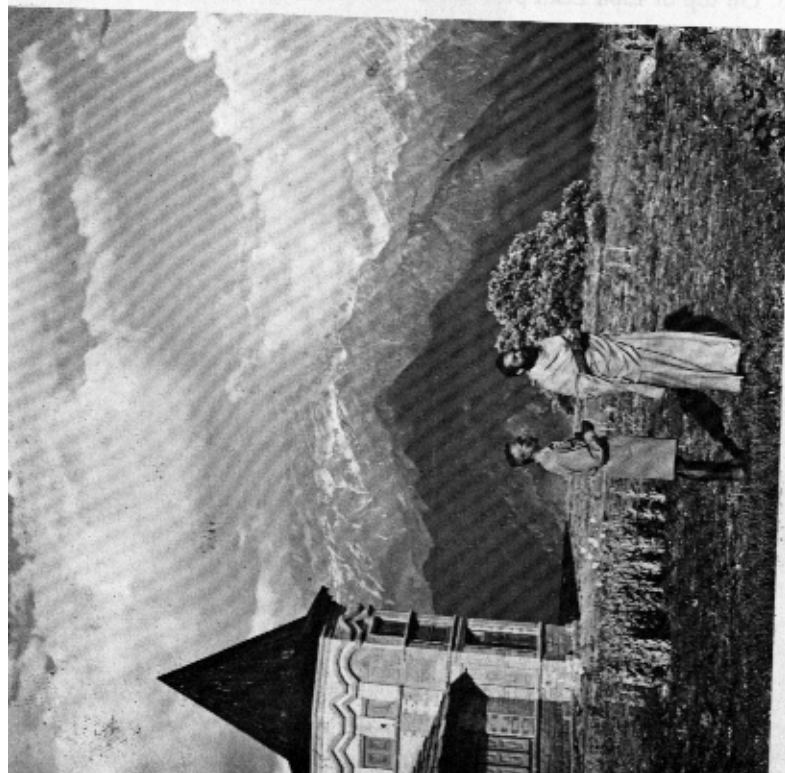
42. With house guest Dillon Ripley, at 46 (then 33) Pali Hill, 28 May 1947.



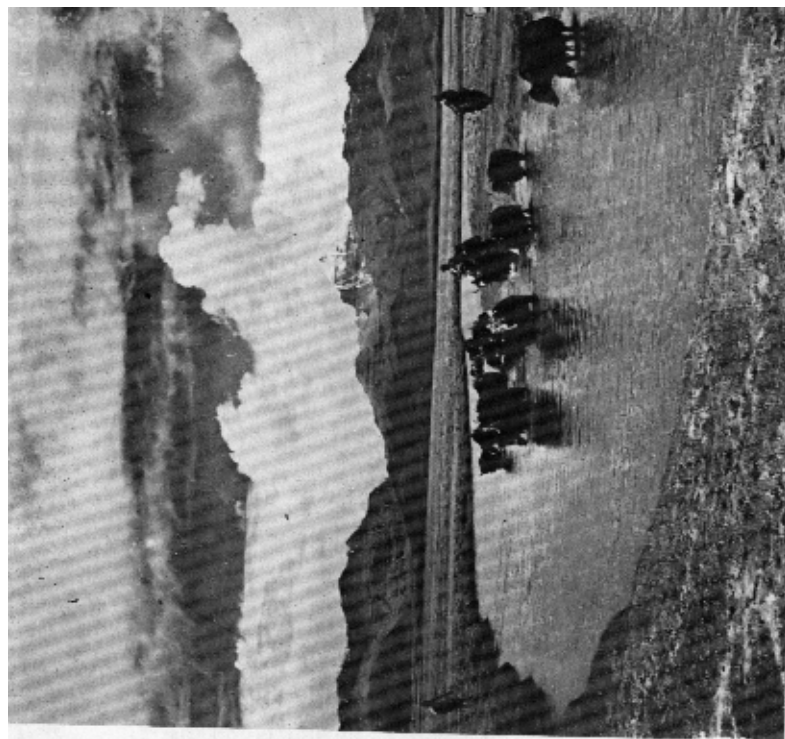
43. On top of Lipu Lekh pass, 16,700 ft., W. Tibet, 1945.

44. Gelong and Lappa loading yak. Tugging with teeth and heaving with body weight. W. Tibet, 1945.





45. With Narayanswamy at his ashram, Sosa, Almora district, 1945.



46. Crossing meandering stream, Barkha Plain, W. Tibet, 1945. (Mt Kailas in background)



47. A 'jongpen' (local governor) on tour with bodyguards, Barkha Plain, W. Tibet, 1945.



48. With Loke Wan Tho above Pahalgam, Kashmir, 1951. Note my plastic raincoat, nibbled by a cow when hung up to 'dry'!



49. R. Meinertzhagen,
Theresa Clay, E.P. Gee.
Doyang Tea Estate,
Assam, 1952.



50: Loading up at Pathankot. Birding trip to Kashmir (1951) with the Lokes
and 'Hawk' (left). (Photo by Wan Tho Loke)



51. On the trail in Sikkim—Loke Wan Tho recovering breath, 1955.



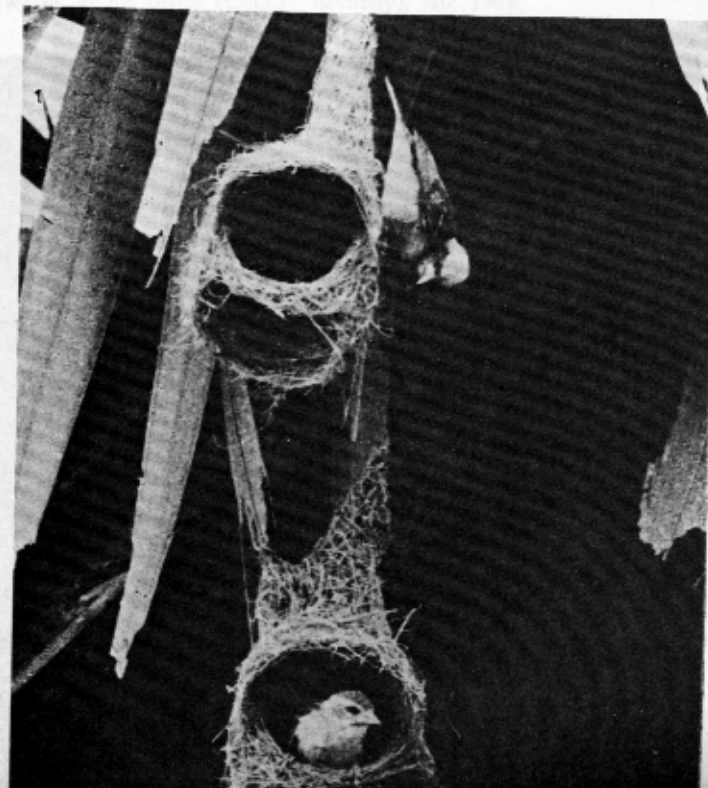
52. Birding in Keoladeo Ghana (Chris in punt), Bharatpur, January 1957. (Photo by Wan Tho Loke)

53. In the early days of bird ringing: nestling waterbirds and hand punched rings. Bharatpur, c. 1958.



54. Sea turtle egg-laying on a beach in Trengganu. E. Coast, Malaya, c. 1960. (Midnight photo by Wan Tho Loke)

55. 'House-hunting' female Baya (lower nest) on inspection visit. Chembur, July, c. 1956.



56. Nesting colony of Edible-nest Swiftlets in Loke's garage, Fraser's Hill, Malaya, 1962.
(Photo by Wan Tho Loke)

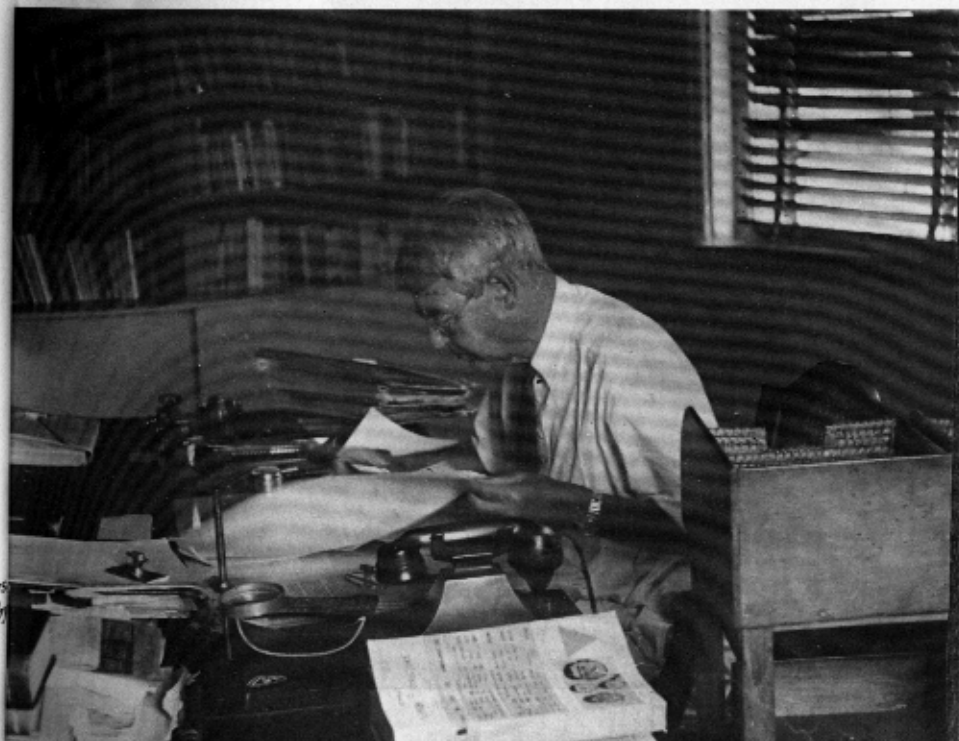


58. Brig. J.E. (Jack) Clutterbuck, R.E.—a kindred spirit and inestimable jungle companion in pre-Partition days—and his wife Mary. Yeovil, 1966. He retired as Chief Engineer, G.I.P. Railway, in 1948, married, and settled down to farming in Somerset.

59. R.E. Hawkins in his office (O.U.P. Bombay), late 1969.



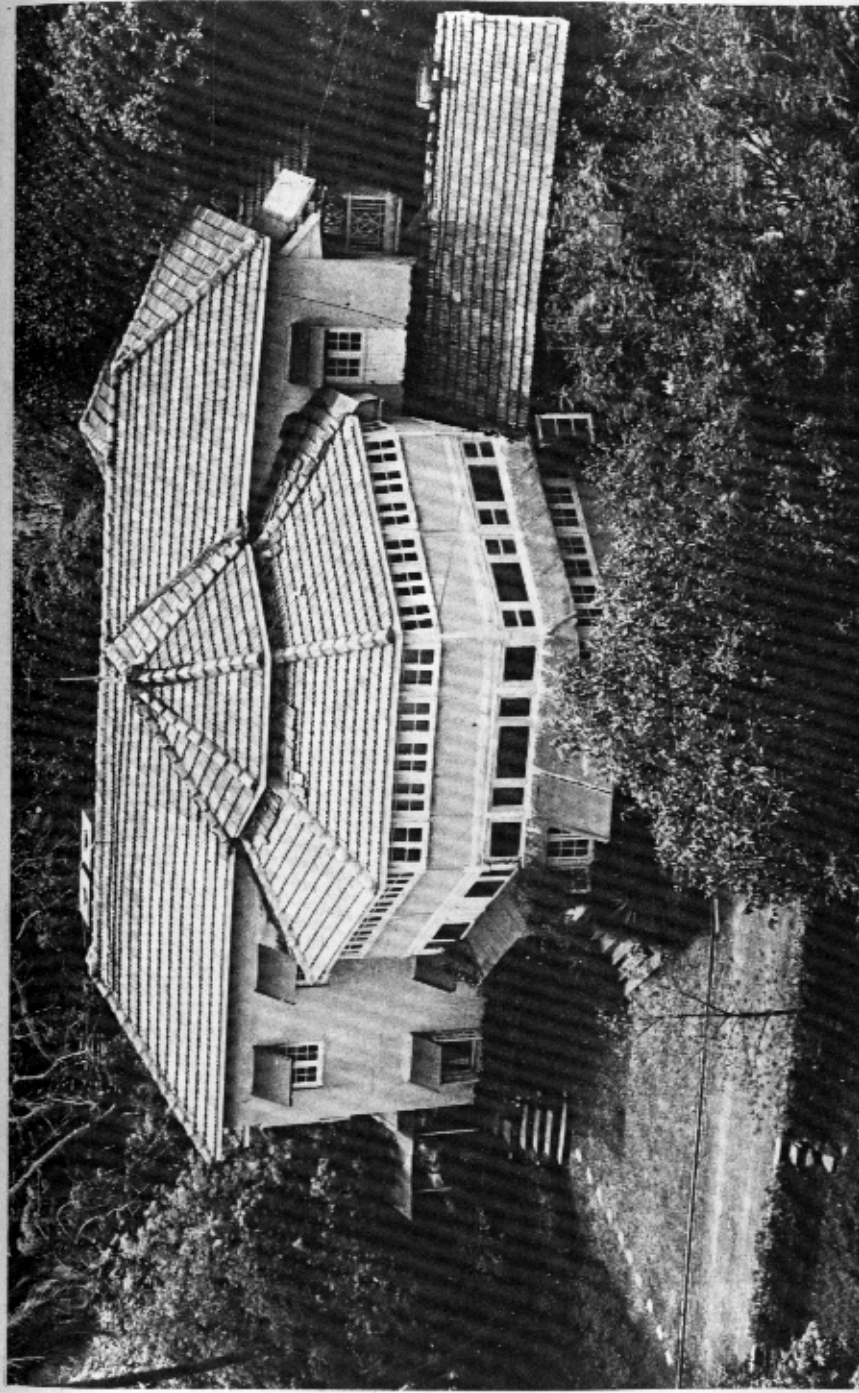
57. Collecting swallows Assam, 1963. (Photo by E.P. Gee)





60. The survivors in c. 1970. SA, Farhat, Kamoo

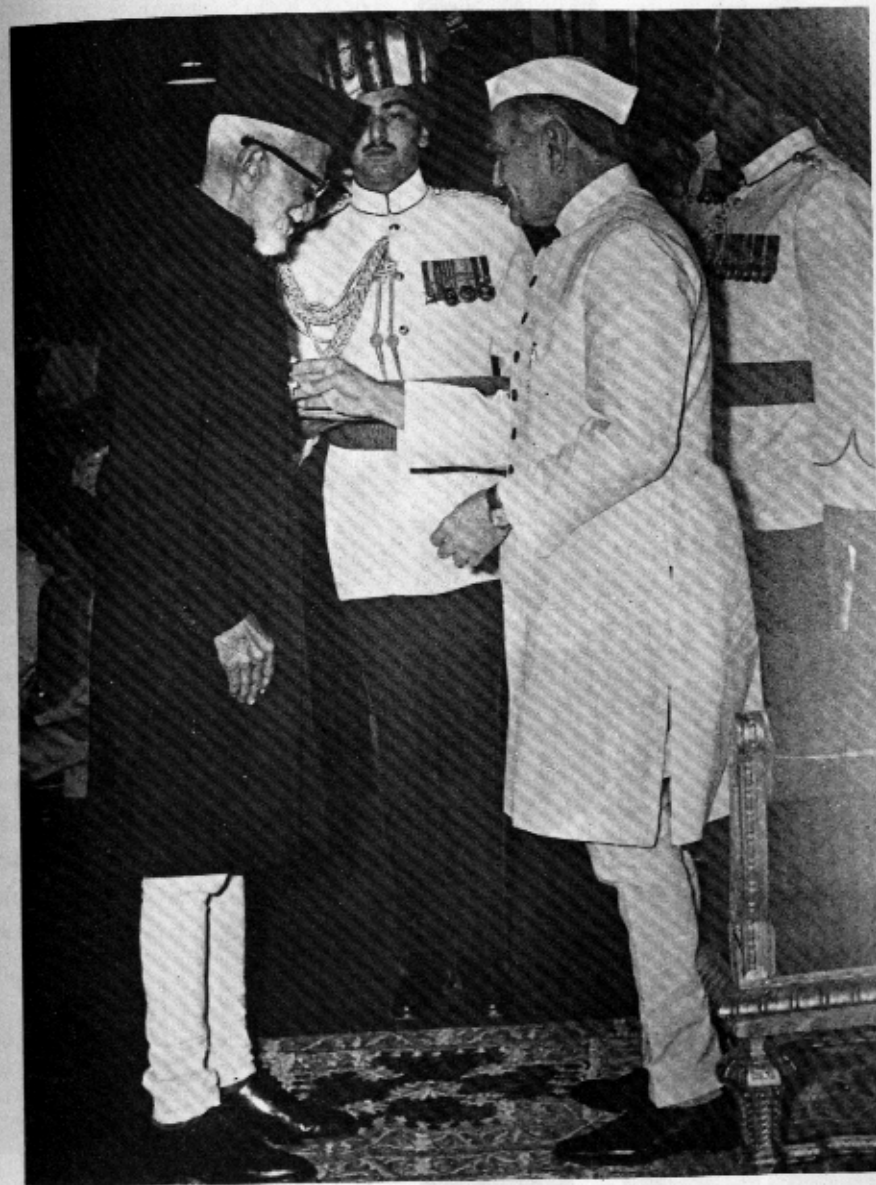
61. The Hassan Ali's, No 46 Pali Hill, my shared home for forty years. (Photo by *Shahid Ali*)





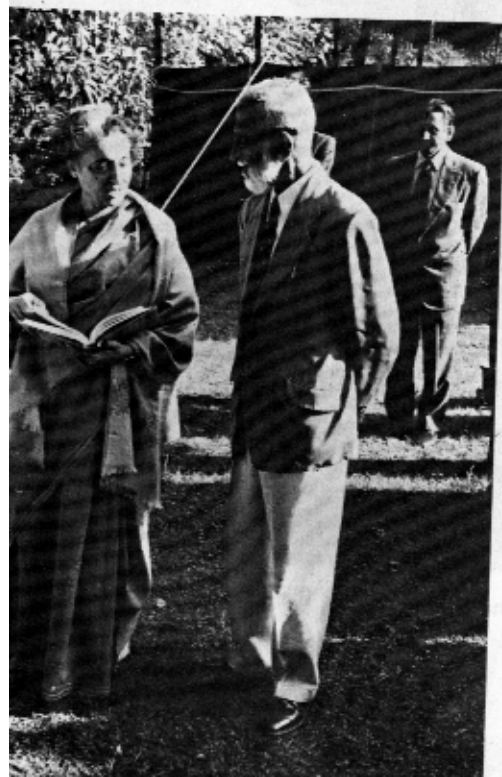
62. William Shakespeare's a master of words
And a tuskier a leader of herds
But wherever you fare
Over land, sea or air
Sálim Ali's the raja of birds.

R.E. Hawkins (left) amuses an audience gathered to celebrate the release of *Handbook*, Vol. 10. Among the amused listeners of the limerick are SA (right), Ravi Dayal (centre), and Mrs Gandhi.



63. Being presented the Padma Vibhushan by the President of India,
3 April 1976.

64. With Mrs Indira Gandhi after investiture of the Padma Vibhushan. (Photo by Anant S. Desai, press photographer)



65. Conversing with Mrs Gandhi after the release of *Handbook*, Vol. 10.

THE INTERNATIONAL JURY FOR
The J. Paul Getty Wildlife Conservation Prize
of the World Wildlife Fund

HAS SELECTED FOR 1975

SALIM A. ALI

Creator of an environment for conservation in India, your work over fifty years in acquainting Indians with the natural riches of the subcontinent has been instrumental in the promotion of protection, the setting up of parks and reserves, and indeed the awakening of conscience in all circles from government to the simplest village Panchayat. Since the writing of your own book, the *Book of Indian Birds* which in its way was the seminal natural history volume for everyone in India, your name has been the single one known throughout the length and breadth of your own country, Pakistan and Bangladesh as the father of conservation and the fount of knowledge on birds. Your message has gone high and low across the land and we are sure that weaver birds weave your initials in their nests, and swifts perform parabolas in the sky in your honor. For your lifelong dedication to the preservation of bird life in the Indian subcontinent and your identification with the Bombay Natural History Society as a force for education, the World Wildlife Fund takes delight in presenting you with the second J. Paul Getty Wildlife Conservation Prize. • February 19, 1976.

J. Paul Getty
J. Paul Getty

His Royal Highness
The Prince of The Netherlands

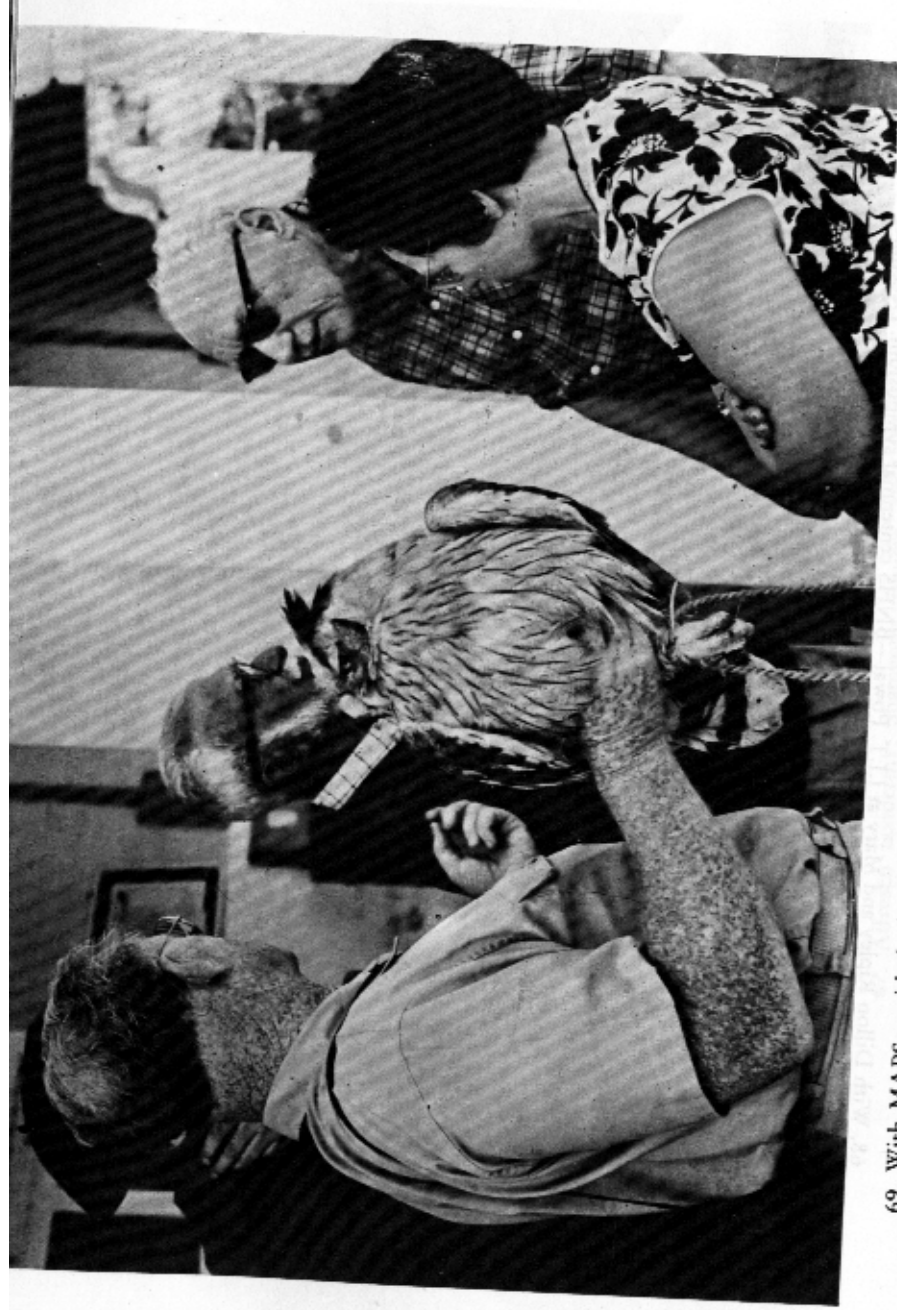
66. Citation of the J. Paul Getty Wildlife Conservation Prize, 1976.



67. Alfresco taxidermy. Shamgong, Bhutan, 1967. With Mary and Dillon Ripley. (Photo by Peter Jackson)

68. With Dillon Ripley and Mary at I.I.T. Powai—BNHS centennial symposium. December 1983. (Photo by T.N.A. Perumal)

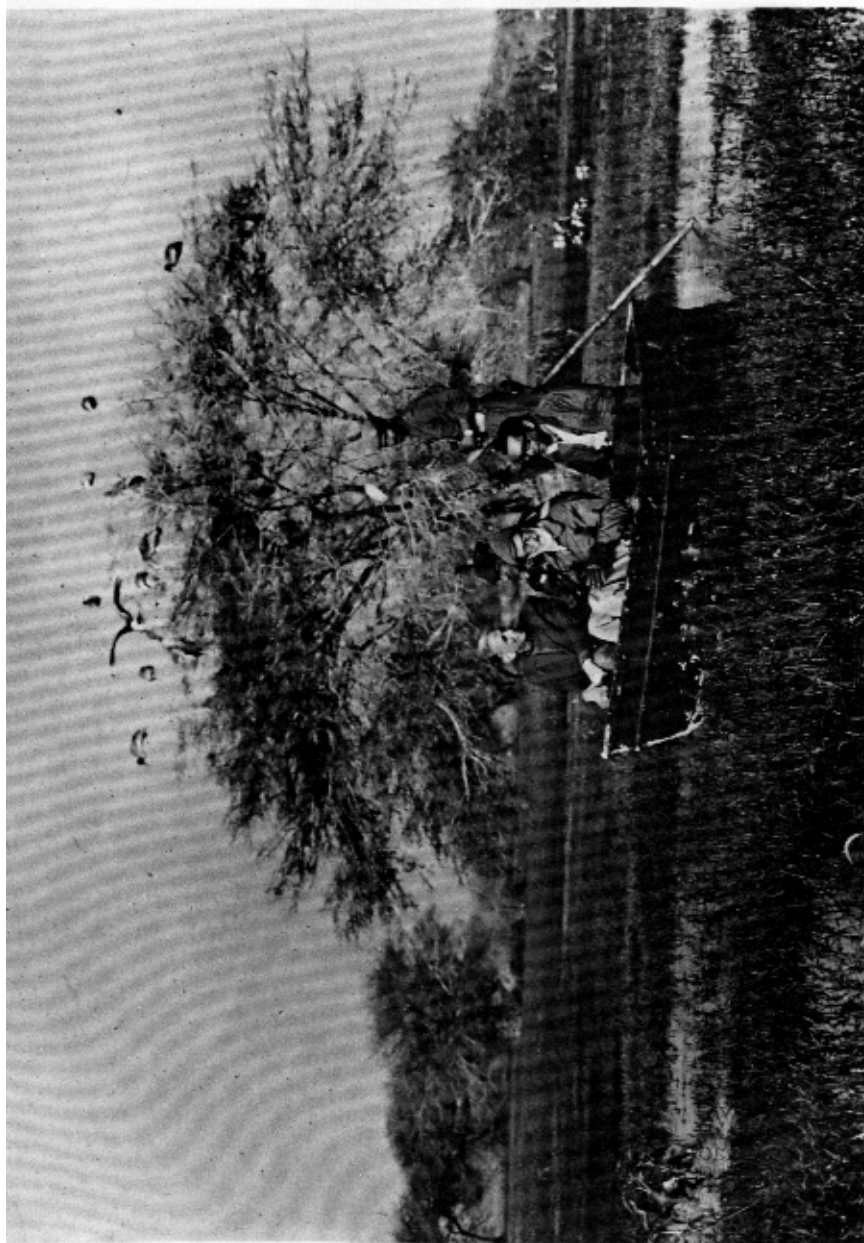




69. With MAPS ornithologist Elliot McClure, Dusky Horned Owl, and USSR virologists Prof. G. Netsky and Dr. Vera Obukhova. Bharatpur, 1967. (Photo by Peter Jackson)

70. Prince Philip, International President, W.W.F., with Executive Committee members of BNHS, 1984. (Photo by Liberty Photos)





71. BNHS team birding in Keoladeo National Park, 1980.
(Photo by Peter Jackson)

was being thoroughly unreasonable and unfair, and that in Pillai's place I couldn't imagine myself or any other sensible person doing anything different. Here were two tents that had had to be rolled up in a hurry when soaking wet, and here was a warm, sunny morning for drying them. If Pillai, sitting in camp, hadn't had the sense to spread them out to dry Meinertzhagen would surely, and with justification, have pounced on him for his stupidity in not doing so. So how had he deserved all this blame and shouting? Meinertzhagen fretted and fumed at my intervention, but then perhaps realized the absurdity of the situation and soon calmed down.

Our daily routine of work was for Meinertzhagen and I to start out after breakfast, around 7.30, in different directions, accompanied by a local shikari as guide, and collect and bird-watch till about noon. Back in camp the specimens were sorted out and readied for delousing. Meinertzhagen's special interest on the expedition, in addition to birds, was to collect the mallophaga (or feather lice) infesting them. These insects are not blood-sucking like the vulgar little creatures we know by that name; they live within the plumage of a bird and feed on the decaying portions of the feathers. They are so narrowly host-specific that a species found on an oriole, say, will not be found on a myna. Thus if the same species of mallophaga is found on two different species of bird, that indicates their probable phylogenetic relationship. In this way mallophaga are of great importance for the study of evolution and taxonomy.

Our indoor activities commenced after lunch and often continued till after dark. To collect mallophaga the bird is wrapped in a piece of white muslin and put into a tightly closing box along with a swab of cotton wool soaked in chloroform. The bird is taken out after a few minutes and the dead mallophaga picked off the linen wrapper and shaken out of the bird's plumage, forcepped into vials containing alcohol and carefully labelled as to host, date, locality and other relevant particulars. While Meinertzhagen was busy with this I weighed the birds, made notes of the moults and colours of bare parts, and dissected the skinned ones for sex, stomach and crop

contents and internal parasites. When finished with delousing Meinertzhagen joined the skimmers while I wrote up my field notes of the morning. Here I am reminded of an amusing incident which was rather typical of Meinertzhagen. Before the expedition started, looking over the list of stores and equipment I had brought, he was jeeringly contemptuous about my having been so sybaritic as to bring two Petromax lamps when he himself had managed well enough without this luxury and with only hurricane lanterns all the forty years or more he had been collecting. I said that the Petromaxes were really meant for myself because I was used to them and could not work at night in poor light. He made some snooty remarks about people getting soft and so on, and there the matter ended. When we got going in our first camp and the Petromaxes were lit, what did I find on return from the evening round of collecting but that Meinertzhagen had calmly monopolized both the lamps for himself, one on either side, seeming to enjoy their brightness rather than missing his old accustomed hurricane lanterns. This set the pattern; thenceforth, and all through the expedition, if I wished to work after dark I had to nestle up to the Petromaxes which had become inseparable from him.

The expedition party consisted of two Christians, one Hindu, one Sikh and three Muslims of two varieties. Doom-sayers had prognosticated that none of us, particularly the *kafirs* (unbelievers), would come back alive: the Afghans were such bigotted Muslims and the country so overrun by brigands that we would be looted, murdered, etc., etc. In the event not once in the entire trip were we ever asked our religion, and we found the Afghan country folk extremely friendly and hospitable. Frequently, when out collecting, villagers working in the fields would run up to us saying, 'You are our welcome guests: you must come to our house and drink some tea.' The open truck with all our personal belongings, rations and even ammunition was left on the roadside wherever we were camping, and we never lost a thing and no one ever bothered us. Except the flies! So much for the prognostications and their perpetrators: it was perhaps the frontier tribesmen our well wishers were thinking of.

Much time was lost in travelling. From Kabul we drove north, camping in six to eight localities for five or six days each. We sometimes stayed in tents, but mostly in sheds, as there were usually no proper dak bungalows except for the fairly posh one at Bamian. Bamian, a centre of ancient Buddhist civilization, is a place of great archaeological and historical interest, with a colossal Buddha, some fifty feet or more in height, carved out of living rock. The place is visited by large numbers of foreign tourists. In the matter of accommodation the *mehmandar* was a great help. When necessary he would go in advance and fix up a place for us to stay in. Communication between two camps was maintained by telephone through police stations and outposts, or other government offices, which were all interconnected by an official network, and with Kabul, the 'nerve centre'. Thus the *mehmandar* could send information beforehand of our movements and get arrangements made.

It was in the Danaghori plain of north Afghanistan that we had our first meeting with the Common Pheasant in its ancestral Central Asian homeland, and I was surprised to find that its natural habitat here was the extensive swampy reed-beds, with practically no trees to roost in. Our Afghan bird collection was especially interesting for me as it contained several species which, till then, I had never come across in my life, such as Snowcock and Seesee Partridge. However, for me the highlight of the whole expedition was the spring (northward) migration that was in visual progress all the time we were in the country, like that of the Redlegged Falcon (*Falco vespertinus*) and Lesser Kestrel (*Falco naumanni*) from Africa to East Asia, and the unbelievable hordes of Rosy Pastor from the Indian plains to their nesting grounds in Turkestan. It was at Danaghori that we struck their main migration. Many thousands of these birds, known as *Saach* in Afghanistan, were feeding and resting en route between 4 and 10 May, their numbers being constantly added to by arrivals from the south. Meinertzhagen estimated that on 6 May they were arriving at the rate of 15,400 in seven hours. During the first week in May there must have been close on half a million Pastors on the Danaghori plain, most of them

roosting in the marshy reed-beds. There were no crops available at the time and the birds seemed to be subsisting entirely on beetles and other insects. The Afghans recognize the *Saach* as beneficial to agriculture and do not molest them even when little other 'lawful meat' is safe from the pot. Another spectacular instance of visual mass migration of Marsh Harriers (*Circus aeruginosus*) was encountered at Bamian on 24 April. The birds, all adult males, suddenly commenced arriving at 6 p.m. from a south-eastern and southern direction, which could mean from the Indian subcontinent. They were obviously exhausted, for they came down and settled in a ploughed field for the night. We counted some sixty-six birds, and more were still arriving when it got too dark to see. One rarely sees more than one or two adult male Marsh Harriers during the course of a day on a large marsh in India, therefore to see such a concentration, and all adults of the same sex bound for their northern breeding grounds, was a truly memorable and thrilling experience. These Harriers must have moved on early, for there was no sign of them in the valley soon after daybreak. On the following day and at the same time about ten adult males arrived from the same direction, roosted in the identical ploughed field and were gone again next morning.

I recall another couple of incidents during the Afghanistan expedition which will round off the record. One morning as usual I went out collecting, accompanied by a local man provided by the *mehmandar*. On a cliff nearby I found the nest of a Rock Nuthatch that was new to me. So I climbed up to a ledge within photographing distance and focussed the camera on the nest. After a long and patient wait the bird returned, but just as I was about to click the man said photography was forbidden there and stepped in front of the lens. I angrily pushed him aside and got my picture all right. However, I felt this man's behaviour was extraordinary, so when we returned to camp I related the incident to the *mehmandar*. The *mehmandar* listened without a word, only looked rather annoyed. I was speaking to him in Urdu, so the Persian-speaking guide had not understood what was being said. When I had done, the *mehmandar* casually asked the man to fetch some paper and a

pencil. Without uttering a word he wrote a couple of lines, folded the sheet and gave it to the man to take to the police station. In half an hour the man was back weeping and wailing, and fell at my feet begging forgiveness. At first I couldn't make out at all what this meant, till I learnt that what the *mehmandar* had written was, in effect, 'This man has insulted our guests. Deliver unto him three of the best.' The scamp weepingly begged pardon and explained that he was only trying to save the *dargah* from desecration. It seems there was a holy shrine half a mile away in that direction which I hadn't even noticed.

Another time the whole bungalow at Haibak was stinking to high heaven. Dead rat we thought. We looked around everywhere for dead rats—under the carpets, behind the cupboards, in the corners of every room and all sorts of improbable places. No rat, but stench continuing. Then I suddenly remembered that three or four days earlier we had got a surfeit of specimens and Meinertzhagen had unstrung one bird from the carrying stick and stuffed it into his breast pocket. When I reminded him of that shirt he scornfully pooh-poohed the suggestion and the search continued. A couple of days later (we didn't change our shirts too often) when he went back to that shirt he felt something wet on his chest. Apparently that Bluethroat had been 'seasoning' in the pocket and had now reached prime condition. Meinertzhagen came up to me sheepishly and said 'Sálim you were right. Here it is!' as he pulled out the stinking mangled little carcass. And all the while he had been grumbling and cursing at the *chowkidar* and everyone else and turning the establishment upside down!

Ornithological Pilgrimage to Kailas Manasarovar 1945

While living in Dehra Dun I had plenty of opportunities for mountain-trekking in the Western Himalaya—chiefly Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Garhwal and Kumaon—often in the stimulating company and under the tutelage of Arthur Foot, an enthusiastic mountaineer with considerable climbing experience in Cornwall and the Swiss Alps. This was chiefly during the long summer vacations of the Doon School of which he was the founding headmaster, as it were. Having a poor head for heights I was never tempted by anything that could be called serious mountaineering, and our ceiling on these treks hardly ever exceeded ten or twelve thousand feet. But the treks did provide opportunities for acquiring a working familiarity with the Himalayan environment—the forests, vegetation and fauna, especially birds.

One of the most exhilarating experiences for a trekking naturalist in these mountains is the kaleidoscopic change that he notices in the vegetation and bird life as he climbs higher through the succeeding life zones. These altitudinal zones or climatic belts are of absorbing interest to the student of ecology, inasmuch as each of them harbours a more or less characteristic vegetation and bird life of its own. The changes are sometimes so dramatic that after a little practice one can guess the altitude fairly accurately from the species present, even without the help of an altimeter. Indeed, for me this is one of the joys of trekking in the Himalaya, particularly the section east of

Nepal—Sikkim, Bhutan and Arunachal Pradesh, where the climate is much more humid and the life zones more abruptly telescoped into one another, from almost tropical in character at the base of the hills to arctic near the tops. Growing familiarity with the southern aspect of the Himalayan range strengthened the urge to see what there was on the other side of this lofty wall. Plans for an ornithological expedition to Tibet in 1939 were thwarted, first by ominous sabre-rattling by Hitler and then by the actual outbreak of World War II, which, as the months and years dragged on, began to look as if it would never end. In spite, therefore, of the increasing difficulties in the supply and transport position and other wartime constraints, I decided that the expedition *had* to be now or never. With promises of official help from friends at court to the extent possible, I started planning for a modest expedition to Western Tibet—from whence there had come tantalizing reports earlier of the breeding of Barheaded Geese, Blacknecked Cranes and other exciting birds, many of which are seen in India only during the winter months and of whose nesting habits and ecology little was known. I was particularly anxious to study some of these. In fact the expedition was to be—as I described it later—an ornithological pilgrimage to Mt Kailas and Lake Manasarovar.

The normal pilgrim route from Almora was chosen not only because it provides the least rigorous access over the Lipu Lekh Pass (16,750 ft) but because it was the only pass free of snow at this time of the year, May. The regular pilgrim traffic does not commence till the end of June or the middle of July. In fact, for the return journey too we were obliged to recross the Lipu Lekh since even in the first week of July all the other passes were snow-bound. Starting from Almora in Kumaon (5,200 ft) the pilgrim route switchbacks up and down, sometimes quite steeply, through fascinating forested country constantly in and out of a succession of life zones, with the snowy ranges hardly ever out of sight. Fifteen marches of an average 13 or 14 kilometres each bring you to Garbyang, the last village within Indian territory. My party was to have consisted of five members: Sucha Singh Khara (ICS) who retired as Cabinet

Secretary in 1965; a lawyer cousin, Saif Tyabji, from Bombay; a fellow ornithologist and expert bird photographer, Loke Wan Tho, of Singapore (refugeeing in Bombay from Japanese-occupied 'Shonan'); Pritam Sen, a young astro-physicist and bird watcher lately back from the USA; and I. For one reason or another the first three had to back out—Saif for failing in the preliminary self-imposed test of physical fitness, Loke for last-minute dysentery, and Khera for some similarly compelling reason. Finally, only Pritam and I were left. We started from Almora on 14 May 1945, the day after enormous bonfires on the surrounding mountain tops for miles around proclaimed the final collapse of Germany in Hitler's war, and amidst noisy fanfare and worked-up public rejoicing. Besides Pritam and myself, our party consisted of seven Dotiyals and one Kumaoni porter, laden with tents, personal baggage and food—chiefly the all-purpose 'tsampa' (roasted gram flour). As *sardar*, cook and factotum we had hired Khem Singh, a youngish Kumaoni from Almora. The sole non-Dotiyal porter was a docile stooge or fag of Khem Singh and was meant to discharge the same leadership function as a goat does among a flock of sheep. In the context of today's soaring cost of Himalayan treks it is interesting to recall from my diary that the daily wage of a porter carrying over a maund (c. 40 kg) was Rs 3 per day (all found) when marching, and Rs 2 when halting. He provided his own rations and their transport. The distance to Garbyang, the last village on the Indian side of the border—c. 237 km—took us fifteen days, involving a series of murderous ups and downs, often of a thousand feet or more each day and all the way. Being younger and sillier in those days, I prided in weighing myself down by stuffing my rucksack with all sorts of inessentials which needlessly added to the discomfort on the 'ups'.

I vividly recall one little incident on a particularly tough and sultry section of the trail which constantly switchbacked steeply several hundred feet up and then the same or more down, then higher up again and so on and on seemingly without end. At the bottom of one of these back-breaking 'saw-teeth,' fully exhausted, and before facing the next one, I sat down for a

breather on a rock, unharnessed the unnecessarily overloaded rucksack and peeled myself an apple. The nickel-handled pocket knife had been my field companion for many years and I had a sentimental attachment to it. After resting a while the march was resumed—a quarter mile of comparative flat followed by another rise of disconcerting steepness. Stopping breathless on the summit to admire the view I casually put a hand in my pocket and found the knife missing. A thorough rummaging of the rucksack produced no knife, so I thought it must have slipped out somewhere along the route. I felt sad at losing an old friend but was unenthusiastic about going back to look for it. However, after a short rest and before resuming the march I idly trained my glasses on the spot where the apple was peeled, now half a mile away and several hundred feet below. Lo and behold, there lay the knife fully exposed and glistening in the morning sun, heliographing its SOS to me. How I cursed it then! But I didn't have the heart to deliberately abandon it though it meant an exhausting and most unenjoyable rescue operation, and a delay of over an hour in the day's programme. But that knife was retrieved. It lived with me for another thirty years, but was evidently destined to be stolen, and that is how we finally parted.

Pritam was the son of an old family friend, Lala Ugra Sen, a prominent landlord and businessman of Dun. I had known Pritam intimately as a bright and gentle-mannered school and college lad before he went to the USA for higher studies, and had been much impressed by the competence he developed in bird-watching in my company around Dehra Dun and in the Mussoorie hills. Thus when he expressed his keenness to accompany me on the Tibet jaunt I gladly accepted him as a potential asset. It all went well for the first few days, but then I began to notice a certain queerness in his behaviour and a marked falling off in his interest in the surroundings and scenery that had driven him so ecstatic earlier. Soon he seemed not to be enjoying himself, marching mechanically behind the porters, looking neither right nor left, engrossed in a book of Hindi verse by the well-known poetess Mahadevi Varma, which he held open before him as he trudged along. I suspected it might

be the altitude, but we were still in the range of seven or eight thousand feet, which is surely not high enough to worry most people. However, the position got worse day by day until, when we were camping on the Barkha plain at about 15,000 ft, it became positively unpleasant for me. Pritam grew morose and would hardly utter a word even when squatting face to face on the tent floor across a box which served both as work table and for meals. While I was skinning a bird or writing up my notes or pressing a plant specimen he would order food for himself directly, bolt it down hastily and hunch himself in a corner or walk out with Mahadevi. After suffering this unpleasantness for a few more days I had at last to suggest to Pritam that since he was obviously not enjoying himself and also ruining my fun in the process, it might be a good idea for him to take some of the yaks with him and return to Almora, leaving me to complete my plans and study by myself. He was so vehement in rejecting this suggestion that, after suffering the situation for a few days (after completing the *parikrama* of Mt Kailas), I decided to cut short the programme and turn back. The other higher passes (Anta-dhura, Jayanti La, *et al.*), by one of which I had meant to return, were still snowbound and impassable, so that there was no option but to retrace the same route. Luckily the intervening five weeks, with the melting of the snows and the approach of summer, had renovated the scene so magically that it was like entering a brand new country. I had learnt from past experience, my own and that of other mountaineers, how important it is to have the right companions at high altitudes, when a small group of assorted temperaments has to live in a huddle day in and day out, maybe for several weeks on end. Murder is seldom away from one's thoughts! However, one would have to be a fortune-teller to know beforehand who will be affected at what height, which makes it difficult to choose the right companions at sea level.

On the return trek, half way down the Indian side of Lipu Lekh Pass, I came across a pathetic party of four Gujarati *jatris*—one male and three females—on their way to seek salvation at Manasarovar and Kailas, followed by a straggly band of Dotiyal porters laden with bedding, tiffin carriers,

lotas, and kerosene tinsful of *chewda*, *gathias* and such like sustenance for the journey. It was early July but summer hadn't set in as yet, and on a cloudy day it could still be freezing cold with the piercing wind blowing all the time. The man had the look of a typical Gujarati sharebroker from Bombay's Dalal Street, returning from business. He wore a loose whitish cotton shirt with a sleeveless woollen pullover, a cotton dhoti pulled up almost to the haunches on one side, thin nylon socks held up on his calves by elastic suspenders, and pointed yellow wafery-soled share-bazaar shoes. The women, one of whom was his tired-looking wife, all wore their everyday cotton saris with long-sleeved sweaters for good measure; whether they wore any additional woollens deeper down I of course couldn't tell. On their feet they had cotton socks and thin-soled open *chaplis*. The party started wailing piteously—especially the women—as we crossed in opposite directions, complaining bitterly that they had no idea and no one had warned them that it would be so cold and the journey so tough. They must have thought me singularly hard-hearted when, instead of sympathizing, I roundly told the man off for his silliness in not making proper enquiries and equipping himself suitably before launching on this hazardous pilgrimage from Bombay with the womenfolk. In the circumstances I could only offer cold comfort and advise them to turn back because without proper warm clothes and bedding they would all assuredly perish; I don't know how they fared afterwards. The plight of those poor women was truly pitiable, but that a shrewd Gujarati stockbroker should be so ignorant and so naive as not to know better seems difficult to imagine.

The Tibet trip was one of the rare occasions of which I kept a narrative diary in addition to separate field notes on birds. On most other expeditions I relied, and still do, on companions like Loke Wan Tho, Meinertzhagen and Dillon Ripley—far more punctilious and industrious diarists than I—for happenings during the expeditions. The Tibet trip was full of interest and thrills and novel experiences too long to relate as a connected narrative in this book. But a few disjointed vignettes picked out at random may help to convey some of the flavour

of a memorable venture. The notes are as scribbled in my diary at the time, with a slight paraphrasing here and there for the sake of intelligibility.

25.v.45 Khela to Sosa (en route to Garbyang) for overnight and next day in Shri Narayanswamy's hospitable Ashram, 8,300 ft, started in 1936. . . . received kindly, shown over buildings, etc. still mostly under construction. Housed in thatched shed which serves as dharamsala for sadhus and others less holy, mostly jatris to and from Kailas. Narayanswamy a handsome youngish black-bearded long-haired man evidently 35-40 or so; speaks good English . . . a Kerala man from certain clues he let drop, e.g. 'yeggs' and his tell-tale accent on 'continuously'. He seems to know Raihana [Tyabji] well and apparently has some pull in Baroda which he often visits in winter fund-gathering tours to the money-pots of Ahmedabad and elsewhere. At present he apparently has only two permanent associates, a holy man in an off-white 'nightgown' with dark ringlets and beard, looking like a decayed bandit—a Hur I thought—and a less holy retired schoolmaster from a neighbouring village who is the general manager of the establishment's worldly activities such as erecting buildings, obtaining food supplies (of the best) and making disbursements to staff and workmen. Was unsuccessful in drawing out the swami re. his past history and future aims. Place impresses me as a particularly good setting for a sanatorium—grand mountain surroundings and overlooking Nampa glacier to E, but not particularly austere or reverence-provoking. Swami does not appear to be—perhaps he hides it effectively—either very learned or scholarly. Large portion of our conversation centred round the journey to Kailas (of which he claims to have made thirteen) and food. One thing we discovered was that the food they have is simple—but best ghee, best milk, best honey and best everything. So the ashram at least provides plenty of rest and wholesome food for the body. Of spiritual food, if any, we saw no trace except a tiny garret in his detached one-room *kutia*, a cabin in which the swami is said to meditate. . . . The gardening part is managed by the 'ex bandit' and he does it very well with the help of Pocha's seeds and gardening catalogue, rattling off names of flowers as from *Index Kewensis*. Beautiful roses, pansies, poppies, calendulas, snapdragons and pinks now blooming. The snow has only lately gone and in another three weeks everything in this garden should be very lovely . . . according to the swami a large snake—about 18 inches thick (by show of hands)—dwells in a serpent grove on steep hillside above ashram, carrying *mani* on its forehead—like a bright shining star. Swami has seen it with his own eyes on dark nights at about 400 yards range. A local chap once saw it and came running to the ashram, laid himself down at the swami's feet and died. 'It was fright that did it.'

3 June 1945. Garbyang. A fine morning at last and so to Nampa Glacier c. 9 miles from here, guided by local tough of forbidding exterior called Gelong. Actually he is quite mild but a good and convincing mimic of a hardened bandit. Nampa lies in Nepal territory, but by some arrangement goats, sheep and cattle are allowed to be taken up there for pasture during the season just commencing. A bit too early as yet. Large areas or grazing meadows are immense snowfields, but already a good few goats and sheep busy on the herbage sprouting up as the snow melts. Azaleas: masses on hillsides just clear of snow; bushes c. 4 ft high with clusters of pale pinkish and purplish flowers, and leaves rather like rhododendron. Many other species of flowers including purple irises, buttercups and a mauve flower that grows in clusters (?) already covering considerable patches. In a fortnight the place will be one mass of colour. Glorious view of glacier and surrounding snow peaks.

4 June 45. Called on Thakur Nand Ram re. final arrangements for crossing Lipu Lekh. Weather since yesterday clear and sunny and crossing now possible. Have decided to engage as guide and interpreter stout Gelong who led us to Nampa yesterday. He is recommended as a trustworthy and efficient man. Apparently it is the guide's business to arrange for coolies, tents and transport animals. From Garbyang we are taking 15 seers of 'suttoo' (tsampa) and are planning that henceforth lunch shall consist of this in varied forms. Has been blowing hard since c. 11 o'clock, ceaselessly, quite No. 6 of Beaufort scale. Particularly violent about sixish and a peculiar hazy bluish light over the surrounding mountains. At 6.30 a fairly severe earthquake shock c. 15 secs. made us rush out of dak bungalow. Resulted in numerous landslides and avalanches. Thick clouds of dust on steep hillsides, as after a cannon bombardment, all around, accompanied by rattle of stones and loosened boulders—some as large as a double-storeyed house—bounding down.

5 June. Had conference at Nand Ram's 10 a.m. and fixed up the following for journey to Taklakot (first village in Tibet) starting tomorrow morning: Gelong, guide interpreter and general manager Rs 3 per day (without food) up to Gyanima; 6 ponies each to carry 50 seers at Rs 10 per pony up to Taklakot, with 2 attendants at Rs 4 each; 1 tent for kitchen and servants, hire up to Gyanima Rs 8. From Taklakot onwards baggage to go on yaks. Gelong to arrange. Plan roughly to reach Gyanima after doing Manasarovar and Kailas around 15 July.

6 June. Garbyang to Kalapani 12,000ft. . . . Temperature at 7 a.m. 39°F . . . Heavy downpour accompanied by thunder and lightning. . . . With every loud peal of thunder stones and boulders come hurtling down the overhanging cliffs. In places you are walking along a narrow ledge—the path—scarcely 3 ft wide with a roaring torrent several hundred feet sheer

below on the other side . . . you wonder whether they are going to get you. It would be too bad if they do. But 'What to do, man!'

7 June. Shangchim. Gelong wishes to start us off for Lipu Pass at 2 a.m. while the snow is hard. Let's hope he will be able to capture and load up the ponies before sunrise! The idea is to get to the top just as daylight appears as path on other side difficult for ponies in the dark. At long last we seem to be on the Edge of Beyond!

8 June. Got up at 1 a.m. Took down and packed up tents and loaded ponies in pitch dark plus one candle and one flashlight torch. Sky ominously overcast. Started at 2.30. There is nothing that will answer to the name of path to Lipu. You just go stumbling and slipping over large stones and boulders that have slid down from the heights and thickly litter the ground. Unpleasant going in pitch darkness and how the pony men kept to the track is a wonder! You climb 3,250 ft from Shangchim to the head of the pass. Fresh soft snow made going difficult for the laden ponies. In places they sank in to the belly and were hauled out with trouble, one man tugging at the head rope and the other literally lifting it out by the tail. Deep clefts in the snow had frequently to be jumped, and serious accidents to ponies and baggage was quite on the cards. Quite a number of times the ponies had to be unloaded and the baggage carried over the bad bits. Exciting but slow work. Great credit to the pony men for boldness and initiative. Head of Lipu Lekh reached about 6.15: temperature 28°F. Heavy freshly fallen snow all over causing unusual delay to the opening of the pass for traffic. Goats and sheep seem to be the most satisfactory form of transport in such conditions. A large flock with laden panniers virtually whizzed past while we and ponies were floundering in the snow. I stood the march very badly, partly due to the altitude and load of sheepskin coat and bulging rucksack (18+ lbs) and partly to no sleep this night and the night before. Climbing over snow most distressing to wind and limb. Character of terrain changes abruptly on crossing the pass. Having trailed the Kali up to its source on the Indian side, we descend following the Karnali down from its source on the Tibet side. Taklakot, the first Tibetan village cis-Lipu, a large and important seasonal mandi (closed in winter) for barter trade between India and Tibet. Halt for procuring yaks to replace the ponies which will return to Shangchim. Helped by Mohan Singh, a merchant from Dharchula with shop in the mandi; engaged a villainous-looking fellow named Lakpha, in coloured felt knee-boots and dirty saya-like robe with a belt round the middle, long greasy hair plaited in a pigtail, and rings in his ears. Hired his four yaks for our baggage each to carry 2 maunds (160 lb) at Rs 40 per yak for 30 days up to Gyanima, plus 30 per month for Lakpha (or Lapha)

himself. Part of his job to keep us supplied with fuel, sticks or dried yak-dung for cooking. . . . Gumpa or monastery on opposite hilltop (above Taklakot). Entertained by presiding lama, known as 'raja', to salted buttered tea (not at all bad!) and some sugar-coated gram. Raja apparently not too hard on himself: sleek, well-fed, with a variety of eatables within arm's reach without getting up from cushion, with young brahmachari [novitiate] in attendance. Tea in silver Tibetan cup in front and more in kettle in corner. Does not impress as being ascetic or scholarly, but *may* be both and more! Gumpa a curious haphazard collection of 'jari-purana' bric-a-brac, including an odd assortment of atrociously stuffed moth-eaten, dust-laden, soot-begrimed animals, e.g. bear, leopard, wild yak, and horns of blackbuck and Schomburgk's Deer hung from ceiling in adjoining room. This with a large admixture of prayer-wheels, prayer flags (perhaps obligingly supplied by Japan!) with some gilt and lacquer odds and ends. Afraid I am very little impressed, in fact rather depressed, at all this weird mumbo-jumbo that goes for religion, and at the blind faith that mankind has developed in things we imagine (why?) will bring salvation in the hereafter. Perhaps a little less dirt on themselves and in the immediate surroundings of the gumpa (which function freely as an open latrine) would do more than all the prayer-wheels within the place whirling violently—on ball bearings if you like.

10.6.45 . . . three of the frisky yaks refused to cross two sorry-looking wooden bridges in spite of much beating from back and tugging from fore. They scampered off and threw part of the load. The animals had to be unloaded at the two places, the baggage carried across by the men and reloaded on the other side. The yaks plunged in the icy water and swam across the strong current . . . I like the pace of the yaks, it just suits me: it is leisurely, and gives plenty of time for dawdling, observation and photography. . . . Bought two legs of sheep from chap carrying a slaughtered animal on a pony for Re 1. Good business for both parties. Am told last year a whole sheep cost only Rs 2½! . . . How to dress for a march is the great problem. Sun burning hot but it takes no time to become freezing (under fleeting cloud).

Sekang 11.vi.45 . . . at 3 p.m. the wind sprang up. This is our first experience of the real stuff which has made Tibet justly notorious. For the last 3½ hours the little tent is being battered and buffeted and in imminent danger of being blown off from above our heads. Luckily we have a spare 'kennel-for-two' type of tent for such an emergency, but let's hope we don't have to use it: it will be bad for nerves! 30°F during night. Canvas water-buckets frozen; very nearly also feet! . . . Stout Gelong has started praying loud and long every morning—rather alarmingly so! . . . The

furze bushes are paradise for the birds and also for the birdnester. Could happily spend a week of field days here, but 'goodgood' things evidently also wait ahead, so must move on. . . . How I miss Wan Tho! With his energy and enthusiasm we could have worked wonders with bird photography.

13.vi.45 Sekang to Nayeze. At summit of pass (Gurla, 16,500ft)—flat and wide enough for 200 Churchill tanks abreast—are many (votive) piles of stones collected by the pious and demon-fearing. The main pile is surmounted by the usual pole with every conceivable form of rubbish—rags, wisps of dirty wool, and horns and skulls of yaks etc.—dangling from it. Lappa, evidently a demon-fearing chap, burst out into a volley of victorious chanting, mounted the pile and added his contribution to the junk. Gelong, though a Hindu fears the devil none the less. He also erupted in a series of pious grunts and chants which I hope the devil understood. We were warned by Khem Singh, for *our* good here and in the hereafter, that from the top of the pass one must always first look at 'rait shide', towards Manasarovar, and not to 'lep' towards Rakhas Tal. To do otherwise is disastrous. . . . Glorious and unbelievable views of both lakes with the icy dome of Kailas towering in the background. Extraordinary opalescent tints of Rakhas and changing shades of Manas according to time of day and state of sky—from almost snow-white through jade and emerald green to deepest ultramarine blue and purplish black: something to remember! Surface of Manasarovar 14,950 ft; circumference 54 miles; greatest depth according to Swami Pranavananda is c. 300 ft. Encircled by mountains of which only the peaks snow-capped at present.

It was near the Thugolho Monastery on the southern shore of Manasarovar that I first ran into Swami Pranavananda, a rational and science-oriented holy man with long experience of exploration in that region. We took to each other immediately, and had a long and interesting conversation on a purely physical plane—therefore in a language I could understand. He has since written two highly informative books on the region—*Kailas-Manasarovar* (Swami Kaivalyananda, 1949), and *Exploration in Tibet* (University of Calcutta, 1950), for which I was happy to lend him some of the photographs and ornithological notes made on this 'pilgrimage'. I met Swami Pranavananda—again ran into him—only after thirty-one years, in 1976, but this time in the very different setting of Rashtrapati

Bhavan, New Delhi, when we were both receiving awards from the President of India, Shri Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed—the Padma Bhushan and I its elder brother.

I like Lappa more and more. He is cheerful and obliging, but like Gelong prays too loud and long, commencing rather unnecessarily early a.m. Also when urging the laden yaks alongside he is incessantly groaning and chanting aloud something pious I presume, but by the nature of the job in hand it could well be otherwise! . . . Through open fly of tent, from flat on back and head on pillow, watched 8 pairs of Barheaded geese together with several Brahminy ducks grazing unconcernedly within 50 yards of tent at sunset. Delightful sight, but oh for a .22 and roast goose instead of the eternal dal and rice!

17.vi.45 Barkha (or Parkha). Plain along foot of Kailas range. An enormous bare flat (miles and miles in every direction) covered with small shingle and scanty scraggy grass. They say will develop into rich pastureland in a month's time. This is verily the Roof of the World and as a battlefield would have delighted the heart of Tamerlane and the warriors of old. Several major wars of ancient times could go on here simultaneously without coming in one another's way. . . . When I chased a Fat-tailed Lizard, Lappa, who is some species of Buddhist, admonished me saying that according to them killing one of these lizards is equivalent to a hundred murders. The lizard having taken to a desert life and renounced the good things of this world—eating, drinking and merrymaking—has become a swami or recluse. Therefore, killing it ranks with the murder of one sadhu = 100 ordinary mortals.

A scourge of rats once ate up all crops and started an epidemic of bubonic plague. A swami introduced cats as counterblast and fixed this 'exchange ratio' which remains stable under every kind of world crisis. Many troops and herds (one of over 70) of Kyang by shores of Rakhas Tal. Very wary: difficult to approach within 200 yards, often taking alarm and scampering off with much dust at much longer range. No young foals! What is the breeding season? Total seen today certainly over 300. Yaks delight in dry dung of wild ass, never failing to pick up and crunch a mouthful as they pass along. . . . Tarchan (or Darchan) 15,500 ft is a dreadful place for beggars. The official *parikrama* of Kailas starts from here, which explains it. We begin earning merit from tomorrow. Man's zeal and greed for merit in the hereafter is truly ridiculous and pathetic. Why can't he be satisfied with trying to gain merit in this one and only life which he can regulate, and leave the future (on which he has no control) to look after itself? . . . First leg [to Diraphuk] of official holy circuit

[*parikrama*] of Kailas along a rough stony up-and-down footpath but well tamped down with the feet of faith and piety, aided maybe also by those of successful blackmarketeers. About a mile beyond Tarchan met two pathetic looking chaps in filthy rags and tatters—apparently Tibetan—who were busily doing the *parikrama* by the prostrating method. They stood up, clapped hands above their heads and threw themselves face down, hands extended forward in supplication, and so on and on to salvation. Poor chaps: I do hope they will not be done out of their hire at the other end! . . . Above this height (16,500 ft) must depend for fuel entirely on dry yak's dung. This assiduously gathered by eagle-eyed Lappa in the folds of his Tibetan robe all the way . . . It is good that one always has something to grouse about, but on the whole this is proving a very interesting ornithological experience. It should be of great help in giving the finishing touches to my *Birds of the Indian Hills* . . . [Bivouac at Dirapukh] . . . though there it is, towering above us, Kailas certainly looks far more imposing from a great distance than from its bottom . . . [Second leg of *parikrama*] I tried hard to cheat by riding a yak [over the formidable Dolma La, 18,500ft] but there was none to be had: at least this is what I was told by Lappa and Gelong. They were horrified at the idea of my hoping to acquire merit so cheaply, and seemed disgusted at the meanness of my nature in even thinking of such a subterfuge. Visited the local Gompa, one of the well known four on the holy circuit. Was nauseated by the general atmosphere of squalor and filth and mumbo-jumbo humbug about the place. Is this really Buddhism or anything worth the name of religion? . . . Murderous business getting to top of Dolma La through deep soft snow. Completely done up. In distress by the time summit reached: could hardly do 50 steps before stopping to 'admire the view'. Laden yaks sinking in soft snow up to belly then frisking and bucking and throwing the baggage about! Descent on other side over enormous boulders, gradient often 1:2 or steeper. Nevertheless yaks seemed to feel all the merrier for it: extraordinary animals! Reached the next bivouac (Zunthulphuk) at 4.30 dead tired. Lay down in tent and philosophized over expeditions and the perversity of people who undertook them when they could be eating mangoes [then in season in India] and lying in dry, soft and comfortable beds instead of damp hard ground with pointed stones poking odd parts underneath. Expeditioners came off poorly!

25.vi.45. Ding Tso c. 15,200 ft a small lake c. 6 miles in circumference NE of Manasarovar. Considered by locals to be the head while Manasarovar is the body—therefore more holy. Its E shore most exciting ornithologically: a broad belt, in places ¼ mile wide, waterlogged bogland or

tundra—a succession of green, spongy, rounded mounds or humps separated from one another by deepish water channels—a miniature archipelago in effect. Many of the 'islets' actually free-floating so that you had to be nippy and on your guard all the time lest the one you had stepped on went deep under before you could jump on to the next. Treacherous quicksands abounding, so extra caution to be exercised. But this zone most promising and productive of good results with nesting birds. Great Crested Grebes, Brownheaded Gulls and about 15 pairs of Blacknecked Cranes around lake and obviously most breeding. Cranes' prancing and leaping dance very like Sarus: also voice and call, the latter slightly higher. One egg taken and scrambled; delicious—a welcome escape from the unchanging dal and rice!

While trying to reach a grebe's floating nest got into serious difficulties and imminent peril of getting swallowed up by quicksands. While on a floating mound at deepest part of bog suddenly realized, when down in icy water to thighs and sinking fast, that there was no other within jumping distance. Panicked wildly. Whipped round and made one desperate leap for last one which meanwhile had floated away further. By sheer luck only *just* made it. A lesson learnt; will heed Gelong's warnings more seriously hereafter!

Gelong, in spite of looks, turns out to be extremely afraid of dying before his time. All morning he was in mortal fear and co-operated as little as possible from a perfectly safe distance, taking no chances in this boggy habitat. He trembles at the distant sight of wayfarers whom he invariably suspects of being 'kharab admi' or bandits on the flimsiest of imaginary evidence. Yesterday he led me a detour of miles (so I felt) to avoid what the rest of our party ascertained to be a family of perfectly harmless individuals from whom there was even a chance of buying some much coveted mutton with tact! (Learnt later that Gelong had good cause to be in constant dread of bandits—who infested the Manasarovar area—having had bitter experience not long before. He had been beaten up, gagged, robbed and thrown by the wayside until rescued by some chance passer-by a couple of days later.)

At the time of my visit, before the Chinese walked into Tibet, the Manasarovar area was known to be dangerously bandit-ridden. Helpless pilgrims from India were frequently waylaid by gangs and robbed and beaten up, and sometimes even killed. I had been warned by Gelong repeatedly of the risk of moving around unarmed and alone, but had thought it was only *his* way of making the trip a little more exciting for us.

However, one morning, attended by Gelong while hunting for nests among a patch of furze bushes, I fancied I noticed a slight movement some distance ahead but paid no heed to it. When we got closer to the spot there suddenly popped up from his ambush a grimy ferocious-looking ruffian with an ugly dagger in his belt and a matchlock slung over his shoulder. He promptly started shouting and gesticulating with alarming truculence which it was perhaps just as well I didn't understand. I have never seen a living human turn so pale as Gelong did upon the bandit's challenge; the expression 'white as a sheet' seems no wild exaggeration. He was visibly shivering with fright and begged me again and again in terrified undertones to flee from this '*kharab admi*'. I realized that it was now too late to think of any such action, and in any case it would have been futile as we had an endless open plain before us and no help within thirty miles. Luckily at that moment I suddenly remembered my shooting-stick (a seat, as used by cricket umpires) which Gelong was carrying. In a loud voice I ordered him to hand it to me quickly. I pretended it was a gun and mimicked loading it with a cartridge drawn from my pocket with deliberate ostentation. I take it that the bandit was unfamiliar with a contraption of this kind with its shining metal parts. He looked visibly concerned when I opened and closed the seat with a noisy klick-klacking, loaded the 'gun' and sloped it over my shoulder like the real thing. It was now my turn to shout back sentiments which I am glad (for his own sake) the ruffian did not understand! Fortunately the bluff worked: the man's truculence subsided at once; he turned away sullenly and made off. I marched back to camp with mock bravado, apprehensive all the time of a bullet following us behind, and thankful for a happy ending to a most uncomfortable situation.

... For the last 3 or 4 days the weather has been quite exceptionally fine, different to anything so far experienced on this trip. The air is champagne and one is never tired of chasing birds. It keeps light till 9 p.m. The sun is broiling hot but immediately a cloud comes over a sweater is welcome. This is the turning point of the trip. Tomorrow we begin working back towards Gyanima while evidently the Tibetan summer is only just beginning.

26.vi.45. Kyangma. Last night (Ding Tso) full moon and eclipse. Great excitement for Lappa and Gelong; both frantic with loud chanting to their respective makers, lasting over an hour, punctuated by blood-curdling shouts and threats to the Black One to let go of the moon which he was trying to swallow. Apparently lamas in a gumpa about 3 miles away on hillside across lake also greatly perturbed at impending loss of moon, and much ghoulis shouting and firing of guns was heard. In the midst of his shouting Lappa shook his knife at the Black One, and this supreme threat no doubt persuaded him to release moon! Was glad to be able to sleep after the rescue. ... Counted 119 in a herd of kyang ... Had visitation from a Jongpen, some sort of governor, on his way from Lhasa to Gyanima (where he is posted), with a band of ragamuffin hangers-on. He sat down on end of P's sleeping-bag, physically examined everything we possess—aneroid, compass, cameras, thermometers, rucksacks, aluminium mug, and of course binoculars—which were freely passed round with much enjoyment. Can't quite gauge the calibre of these gents called jongpens. Even if only of tahsildar status surely he can't have seen or heard of many of these things for the first time as without doubt he appeared to! He couldn't get over the needle pointing towards Kailas whichever way the compass was turned. Great merriment among the gangsters. ... Snow finches of two species (Rednecked and Tibetan) nest in rat holes apparently live together on friendly terms and with occupant mouse-hares. A rat and a finch seen to go down same hole! ... Large herds of Kyang (one of over 100). The places they frequent have, from time to time (commonly) a drag mark in the sand, something like the track left by a snake, or by a frisky cow that has a log tied round its neck (to prevent it from straying). It is about 2 or 2½ inches broad and often up to 30 feet long (one over 90 feet), not straight but roughly wavy. Locals say it is made by an ass dragging one hoof; but why is the ass *such* an ass?! I wonder if these marks have been observed before and explained? ... In the clear atmosphere of the boundless Barkha plain everything looks just across the way. But what a way it is! Miles and miles and miles you seem to get no nearer. It is tiresome work ... Prescribed a mixture of *gur* and *tsampa* for a species of biscuit for tea. Result: the hardest and most waterproof type of reinforced concrete ever heard of in the toffee line. Fault of course Khem Singh's for getting the mixture wrong. Chewed a block like *supari* for over half hour then gave it up. Would do well as catapult ammunition! ... Yak moults (from long-haired winter to short-haired summer pelage) in flakes, and patchily: neck and back first, belly and legs last when the season hots up. The belly hair has to be sheared as it does not flake off. The yakmen pull off flakes of hair and begin spinning

yarn on a sort of 'takli' while marching alongside the laden animals. This yarn used for making tents and blankets. Black preferred to white as does not show dirt: fetches twice the price of white. Annual produce 1 kg+per yak. Domestic bull and cow yak produce best quality hybrid 'jhibbu': fetches double the price of pure yak, which presently Rs 70 to 140 or so. Jhibbu much preferred generally as hardier and more docile and tractable. Can be put to plough. Although superiority of jhibbu generally recognised, still not bred by everybody as considered unnatural and immoral practice, bringing bad luck. So only the wicked prosper! Yak refuses to enter shed or stable just as it refuses to go over bridge. Produces a single young per year. Gestation 9 months: calfs in spring. Normal life 18-21 years. Full strength at 4 years. . . . When arriving at the stone pile that marks the head of every pass, the yakmen jump and prance about frantically, yelling 'So..so..so..so..' in prescribed rhythm, 'So' apparently being some species of deity. When asked why he did not yell when crossing a minor pass, Lappa said he didn't care for minor deities with whom he can argue and quarrel on more or less equal terms. He only respected the major gods who needed to be kept on the right side of. (The Dreamer whose dreams come true?). Have not been able to make out at all whether the people here take religion seriously or as a joke. Superstition, black magic and devils of numerous species certainly keep them in fear and trembling, but about the rest? . . . The shops in the mandis [Taklakot, Gyanima, Dharchula, *et al.*] carry an extraordinary assortment of stock-in-trade: cloth, cast-off woollens of every description, electric torches, new and secondhand army boots and plimsolls, tea from Lhasa and Berinag, sugar (*misri*), hurricane lanterns, safety-pins and miscellaneous improbable items requiring great ingenuity and imagination to muster. The shopkeepers also carry on barter, trading various articles with sheep's wool, furs, borax, etc. Was shown 2 or 3 beautiful Snow Lynx skins, rough cured but not mangled, obtained by barter. Jaman Singh of Dharchula sells them to a merchant in Peshawar for Rs 130 or thereabouts each.

13

 Loke Wan Tho

In a slim little magazine called *Victory* that used to be published in Bombay during World War II for the benefit of transient army personnel, there appeared in 1942 an article entitled 'The Raven who Lost his Temper'. It concerned an incident that occurred while a young bird photographer—later to acquire international fame—was trying to photograph a heron's nest on the sea cliffs on the Pembrokeshire coast, which also had a pair of nesting ravens nearby. The writer of this article was given as Wan Tho Loke. A school master of the Doon School at Dehra Dun, J.T.M. Gibson, then Lieutenant Commander in the Royal Indian Navy, who had volunteered for military service and was temporarily posted in Bombay, saw the name and wondered if this was the same Loke whom he had taught as a boy at an English school in Switzerland some years previously. He contacted the author through the editor of the magazine and found that he was right. After finishing his education at Cambridge and London Universities, Loke, still in his mid-twenties, had returned home to Singapore to take charge of a flourishing business empire built up by his late father, and which was conducted with consummate sagacity and success during his minority and education abroad by his wise and capable mother. This was shortly before the Japanese tide swept over Malaya and converted Singapore into Shonan. In anticipation of that foregone eventuality, Loke, his mother, and younger sister, Peng, were forced to flee Singapore and seek refuge in India, at Bombay. In the course of the escape on I think a Dutch ship, Loke was subjected to a number of

harrowing experiences which nearly cost him his life. His ship was bombed by Japanese aircraft and sunk, and he was badly scorched by a blast in the fire it caused on board. His eyesight, feared lost at the time, was fortunately restored only after several weeks in a hospital in Jakarta, where he was taken after being 'salvaged' from the sea by an Australian cruiser. Gibson asked Loke how he proposed to occupy his time during his exile, and what his special interests were, so that he could help with suggestions. On learning that one of Loke's particular passions—apart from English literature and writing—was bird watching and bird photography, Gibson promised to put him in touch with a bird-watching friend, meaning me. The dinner meeting in Gibson's naval quarters a few days later proved mutually momentous and providential for both the guests. It brought me quite fortuitously in touch with a most unusual and lovable character and marked the beginning of a friendship which, through a close identity of outlook and interests, grew in depth and understanding over the years, right until his tragic death in an air crash in 1964. For Wan Tho that meeting with me and his consequent introduction to the BNHS also proved a blessing. It opened up avenues for meaningful and enjoyable utilization of his enforced leisure in India, and saved him from the deadly boredom it could otherwise well have entailed. It helped him to use his talents and opportunities to best advantage and in the process to develop into a highly competent ornithologist and world-class bird photographer. Both the Society and I continued to profit from his grateful munificence during his lifetime—a process that was kept up by his gracious mother Mrs Loke Yew, and by his friendly and charming sister Peng (Lady Y.P. McNeice) after the former's death. In the twenty-two years that this inestimable friendship flourished there was hardly a birding expedition, international bird conference or bird photographing holiday which Loke did not share with me personally or with munificent financial support. Later on he maintained that in this way he derived almost as much vicarious satisfaction as from personal participation; and since pressure of business gave him so little respite for birding expeditions, this was the next best thing.

Being much impressed by Loke's keenness about birds and bird photography I casually asked him if he would be interested in joining me in a birding expedition to Kutch, for which I was just then preparing. Loke jumped at the offer and accepted it at once. In the course of the next four months in Kutch I had ample opportunity to test his capacity for spartan living—for putting up cheerfully with the rough-and-ready existence which low-budget bird surveys involved—living completely off the land, sometimes in bug-ridden *dharamsalas* with loud throat-clearing pilgrims, or maybe tumbledown cowsheds. On such expeditions there was *dal* and rice for lunch and rice and *dal* for dinner, with light provided by smoky hurricane lanterns, and there were sundry other tiresome deprivations then particularly necessitated by Hitler's war. Though at that time I had no inkling whatever of Loke's social status or life-style back in his Singapore homeland, it was obvious that he was unused to such privations, and all credit to him that he bore them seemingly joyfully and with such good humour. Never in all the time we lived together in the field on more or less this pattern in Kutch, and off and on for two or three years thereafter, did he once complain or grumble about the prevailing discomforts, nor drop a hint about his patrician life-style in his own country before being forced out by the Japanese. Outwardly he seemed to enjoy and thrive on these discomforts as though to the manner born; except I realize that with the chronic dysentery he was uncomplainingly suffering from all the time, it can't have been fun running out in the open in the middle of the night looking for a bush!

Wan Tho passed the initial test in Kutch with flying colours. I was happy to discover in him a truly kindred spirit and dedicated co-worker, ever ready to pull his weight and more under all circumstances. His keen sense of humour, unfailing courtesy and quiet good manners, friendly disposition and capacity to mix at all levels, and to remain cheerful and unruffled under a leader not famous for sweetness of temper, made him an ideal adjunct to our field camps. The near identity of our outlook and interests brought us closer together than any other of my latter-day friends. During his forced exile in India, while

the Japan war was on, the countrywide regional bird surveys gave him a god-sent opportunity to indulge his passion for natural history and the out-of-doors, and devote his entire time and energy to ornithology and bird photography—and in this he came to be regarded a maestro.

Wan Tho was a great lover of English literature, with a connoisseur's sense of appreciation and criticism. This made him a charming and stimulating companion in camp, when all the mundane chores of the day were over and we sat reading after dinner in the light of a couple of miserable hurricane lanterns. He would break out now and again into reading aloud passages which had specially caught his fancy, sometimes with a chuckle and often with an obvious smacking of the lips. He himself wrote pleasingly in an easy style and with a keen sense of humour. His meticulously kept diary of day-to-day happenings all through our various collecting expeditions together help to recall many incidents I had long forgotten, since my own dry-as-dust notes chiefly concerned birds and ecology.

Most of our shifting from camp to camp across the country had to be done, as in the Hyderabad survey, by privately owned converted buses, usually tired veterans and invariably overloaded. Petrol was scarce and strictly rationed during wartime so that most such jalopies had been converted to run on charcoal gas. When an incline became too steep for the engine to manage on its own, all able-bodied passengers were expected to get out and push. Wan Tho always entered into the spirit of this game with gusto, but on one particularly hot and sultry midday, scrambling back into the bus still panting from an extra vigorous exertion, he casually said 'Sálim, you should really have a station wagon of your own for this sort of work. You will then be independent of all this trouble and can load up your baggage and equipment whenever you wish and go off wherever and whenever you like.' The argument seemed flawless. I agreed with him entirely, but conditions at the time being what they were, financially and otherwise, thought no more about it until most pleasantly reminded of it a few months later.

Japan had lost the war; Shonan had been reconverted to

Singapore as of old, and the widely scattered exiles were being fast herded and repatriated to the island by the British government in order to rehabilitate its disrupted trade and industry in the shortest possible time. Wan Tho, who was among the first batch of businessmen selected for return, had greatly feared that his business would have been completely ruined and that he would need to start it all over afresh. It was the pleasantest surprise of his life to find that, thanks to his Chinese manager's tact and sagacity, the business had actually thriven during the Japanese occupation and that he himself was one of the wealthiest men in Singapore once more! Announcing this joyfully in one of his first letters to me after his return, he casually reminded me of that long uphill bus push in Madhya Pradesh and what he had 'philosophized' to me on the occasion about a station wagon for my field work, adding 'I enclose a cheque: buy yourself a suitable station wagon; and remember there is more where this came from in case this much doesn't suffice'.

True to his ancestral Chinese tradition Wan Tho had an eye for beauty—beautiful mountains and natural scenery, beautiful flowers and birds, beautiful pictures, beautiful porcelain, beautiful everything else, not excluding beautiful women in whom, indeed, he was somewhat of a connoisseur! They were important enough always to find mention in his diary wherever encountered. His first wife Christina was a very beautiful woman: unfortunately she herself knew it only too well. She was never happier than under a constant shower of expected adulation. I fear I was not popular with Christina because, not being much of a courtier, I could never bring myself to pander to her vanity in this blatant fashion. I suspect that at times she was even somewhat resentful of Wan Tho's intimate attachment to me—being my *alter ego* as it were—especially when the three of us were together at international bird meetings or on motoring or photographing holidays in Europe and elsewhere, or when I was staying as their guest on my frequent visits to Singapore at Wan Tho's invitation. It is a pity that Chris should have banked so heavily on her glamour and good looks. She had no need to since she possessed many other more solid and

less ephemeral qualities and accomplishments to make her stand out from amongst most of her peers. Although Chris could be disarmingly charming when she chose, in company and as a socialite hostess, their temperaments and outlooks on major issues had seemed to me so different from the very beginning, while we were holidaying together for a couple of months in Kashmir soon after their marriage in 1950—his so quiet and scholastic, hers so flashy and gaiety-loving—that I had feared the partnership wouldn't last. In the event, after ten or so uneasy years of 'terrible storm and treacherous calm' the end came. The deliverance cost Wan Tho £93,000 (or was it 97?) by way of alimony but, as he put it with a sigh of relief, 'it was cheap at that!'

Soon after that bird photographing trip to Kashmir with the Lokes in the spring and summer of 1951, I was invited for a film talk on Kashmir birds at the Bombay University Women's Hostel. Here I met a young female journalist of about 35 who, though not glamorous, did for the first time since Tehmina's death seriously throw me off balance by her charm and intelligence. She spent a couple of week-ends at 46 Pali Hill while Kamoo and Hassan were away on a holiday in Japan. Grapevine rumours revived premature hopes in my dear sister Kamoo who, with my other sisters and nieces, had all along been scheming and trying to get me to settle down once more. AK (as I shall call her) came to spend a week of birding with Wan Tho and me at Bharatpur as the Maharaja's guest, during which we came to know each other better, and I saw more of her again in Delhi and Bombay later. Though I sometimes still think of her with mild nostalgia, it was on the whole lucky for me, and perhaps less doubtfully so for her, that our mutual infatuation was short-lived, because on the touchstone she didn't seem the sort who would in the long run relish the rough-and-tumble gypsy living that was the fate of an impecunious freelance ornithologist. After 1952 or so this apparition vanished into the void, and I have heard no more about her since. In Wan Tho's meticulously written diaries of our expeditions together I find the following entries from that memorable week in Bharatpur, and the sentiments he had confided to his 'Dear Diary'.

October 19. Mrs A . . . K . . . arrived today from Delhi. A dark lady, spare of frame and drawn of visage. A lady with a mission in life. Sense of humour rationed. A vegetarian, arty. Age about 35. About 5'3" and weighing practically nothing. Communist by sympathy . . . October 22. Sat up on roof of Maharaja's guest house until late (11.20) discussing Indian music and dancing. A is more interesting and intelligent than I had at first imagined. . . . Romance is entering in again, late, into Salim's life: I hope he will not be hurt, but I fear for him.

No need to, it all soon blew over, and just as well!

Between the collecting expedition in Kutch and his return to liberated Singapore we didn't have a chance to do another major systematic regional survey together, though short, casual collecting and shooting trips to different parts of the country were frequent. Both of us had greatly looked forward to, and carefully planned for the 'pilgrimage' to western Tibet in 1945 from which, to our mutual disappointment, Wan Tho had to back out in the last stages of preparation due to some urgent minor surgery. Most of our longer collecting and photographing expeditions after his permanent rehabilitation in liberated Singapore—chiefly in Bharatpur, Kashmir and Sikkim—were comparatively comfortable affairs, specially as regards logistics and commissariat. They were indeed more in the nature of a busman's holiday, though serious enough to be scientifically meaningful all the same.

My *Birds of Sikkim* is based chiefly on two such expeditions of two to three months each, both funded by Wan Tho, and in one of which he participated personally. His diary of the time is replete with evocative anecdotes which recall many long forgotten incidents and details. This was around the year 1955, long before democracy and the Border Roads Organization overran Sikkim and swept it into dubious modernity. Even so-called jeepable roads were non-existent beyond Gangtok then, and leisurely enjoyable back-packing with mule or porter transport for baggage was the normal mode of travel beyond the capital.

Of the Kewzing-Pemionche trail the diary says

The man who wrote that 'it is better to travel than to arrive' clearly had never walked a Himalayan mile! Every time we do a march, I am always

happy to arrive.' [Of dak bungalows along the trail]: These rest houses are provided with crockery, cutlery, beds, and mattresses and other necessities, and are therefore very comfortable to live in. I am sitting on the verandah of the rest house (Temi) writing my notes looking at the roses now in full flower, with the blue hills beyond shrouded in mist. I have had a good wash and am now in my pyjamas, although the time is only 5.45 p.m., and with body pleasantly weary and mind content, I look out and am thoroughly happy. A party of Whitecrested Laughing Thrushes have just flitted by making their loud cheerful cackle. Dinner will be served in a short while and by 8.30 or so we shall be in bed. It is a good life, certainly the antithesis of the life I lead in Singapore. I have not read a newspaper for days . . . We get up just after 5 in the morning, lunch at 11, dine at 6 or 6.30 and go to bed not later than 9 p.m. [On the trail to Singtam]: We also met a number of very pretty girls going to market, and I asked permission to photograph them.

One of the guests on duty tour staying at the Gangtok Residency at the same time as ourselves was a Superintending Engineer of the Central PWD in charge of a large district stretching from Calcutta to Sikkim and Assam. He was too precious a subject for Wan Tho's incisive diary to miss.

He was a curious fellow, utterly without table manners as we understand them: thus he would eat off his knife, drink his soup loudly, and blow his nose into his serviette. His speech was peculiar and not edifying. In speaking of concrete roads, which he held were unsuitable for the climate of Sikkim, he said 'They crags (cracks) and sings (sinks): they set hard like i-stone: what is the bloody sense? Must (most?) definitely costlier.' And of oil extracted from Assam, 'it cost us not cheaper, even, I mean to say, into our terra firma. Do you see what I mean?' . . . Rai Bahadur Densappa [the Chief Secretary to the Chogyal's government] on the other hand, is a man of great intelligence with an impish sort of humour. When he heard that I was to be escorted beyond the Inner Line in northern Sikkim by the Tahsildar 'to keep an eye on me' ('a watcher to watch the bird watcher', as Sálím put it) the Rai Bahadur said 'You make use of him. He is the head of his district, and he has only to wink and he gets it. You extract venom from a cobra and make good medicine with it: you do the same with him. But he is much better than a cobra of course!'

In the event the *tahsildar's* company actually proved a boon since it saved us a great deal of logistic and procedural worry.

Of a nest of the Ibisbill photographed at Yakthang, near

Thangu, altitude c. 4,000 metres (18 April 1955) the diary reads: 'As a result of leaving the hide in place overnight, the bird was absurdly tame, and Sálím could make any noise inside the hide without frightening it. At one time Sálím got so tired of having the bird perfectly still on the eggs for a long time that he tried every method, short of getting out of the hide, to make it move, including singing "God Save the King" full-throatedly, but to no avail.' Of course I had expected that at least would make the bird stand up!

About the Thangu region: 'Everywhere one sees prayer flags. The prayers are printed on them from blocks which may be had at the monasteries. Do we, who believe in Science, believe in all this, or do we say with Tolstoy "Science, that is the supposed knowledge of absolute truth", or guardedly pray with the Scientist "O Lord, if there be one, save my soul, if any".'

Mention of *The Birds of Sikkim* reminds me of one particularly uncomfortable incident during the ornithological survey of the Chogyal's state around the year 1955. In the time I was camping at Lachen there was a fairly severe earthquake in the area, causing a number of major landslides among the surrounding mountains. A large section of the mule track between here and Chumthang, running along a steep contour, had slid down into the torrential river several hundred feet down, almost vertically below. Porters and pack animals had trampled out a fearsome, narrow alternative footpath across the loose debris some distance below the vanished original—how fearsome I was to discover only when I got on it some days later. As usual I had left the camp all by myself loaded with rucksack and binoculars well ahead of the porters, hoping to do some quiet birdwatching en route. While uneasily picking my way over this terrifying ledge I reached a spot where the loose detritus from the hillside above had slid down to block the narrow path in the form of a scree which was still in ominous motion. Though only a couple of metres wide, this patch would need stepping on to get across. The risk of tumbling down with the debris into the river so steeply below gave me cold feet, with a peculiar feeling of giddiness and inertia that

left me rooted to the spot. I could move neither forward nor turn back, so promptly squatted down, resigned to await the arrival of the porters no matter how long that might take! During the half hour or so of waiting, the 'conveyor belt' flow of the powdery earth over the scree and edge of that awesome abyss had a strangely hypnotic effect and was not conducive to self-confidence, and I was mightily relieved to see the first heavily laden porter arriving. He seemed rather perplexed to find me resting in such an unlikely shadeless spot but understood when I pointed to the scree in pantomime. Hauling me up casually by one hand, he stepped nonchalantly on the scree and whisked me across, continuing his march without interruption as though it were all within the day's work. The rest of the laden porters who followed seemed not even to notice that anything was wrong with the path. They marched unconcernedly over the scree simply as if it was not there. In retrospect, it was not an experience of which I can feel proud, and singularly deflating to my ego.

The only other time I have experienced a feeling of similar hypnotic paralysis and complete helplessness to move forward or back was when—in spite of being forewarned—I had rashly persisted, partly in a spirit of bravado, in wanting to climb up the roughly 100 ft tower of Oxford University's Museum of Science to look at the swifts nesting in the ventilators which David Lack and his intrepid wife Elizabeth had been studying since 1948. The results of this classical study are in Lack's fascinating book *Swifts in a Tower*, published in 1956. This Museum tower rises about 60 feet from its base in the upper part of the building. From here the ascent to the floor of the tower is by a steep narrow spiral staircase which is in complete darkness for part of the way. It is followed by a terrifying, almost vertical 30 ft ladder without a handrail, through the first platform. Another 30 feet or so up a slightly less but still sufficiently forbidding ladder brings you up to the second such platform within easy reach of the glass-backed boxes in which the birds can be observed on their nests. I give these details merely to justify my overwhelming temptation to give up after one look down the shaft of the tower from the head of that

terrifying vertical railless ladder. This I would most gladly have done had not Dr Lack been apprehensively watching my progress from below. But having unwisely rejected his earlier dissuasion I felt honour bound to grit my teeth and make it to the top—cost what it may—though at one stage I was paralysed with fright and ready to collapse.

Flamingo City

Among the Indian princes and princelings whom I had opportunities of knowing a little more intimately than others—chiefly on a naturalist's plane—was Maharao Vijayarajji of Kutch. He was over sixty when he came to the *gaddi*, having been on a patient and seemingly unending probation as Yuvraj for forty years or more, thanks to the robust good health of his father, Maharao Khengarji, who had come to be regarded by two generations of his loyal subjects as an ancient, indestructible monument of Kutch. Both father and son were keen sportsmen and knowledgeable naturalists, the former as a hunter of big game, the latter particularly interested in birds—game as well as in general. Besides being an excellent shot with gun and rifle, Vijayarajji was an accomplished tennis player in his younger days and a 'habitual' entrant in all-India tournaments, which he frequently won since many of the renowned players of the day were only too happy to partner him in the doubles.

I first became acquainted with Maharao Vijayarajji in 1942, soon after he, at long last, ascended the *gaddi*. By then he had lost some of his youthful vigour and assumed a comfortable, portly shape, abetted by lack of exercise forced by an injury to his knee. Though having to cut down on shikar jaunts needing physical exertion and mobility, he still retained an enviable expertise in small-game shooting and a lively interest in watching birds, especially of his own state. Thus it was at his invitation and under his generous sponsorship that I undertook a field survey of the bird life of his fascinating state with a view to

producing for him an illustrated book on the birds of Kutch on the lines of my *Book of Indian Birds*, which had caught his fancy. In 1943 World War II was still very much on and petrol was severely rationed in India, bringing private transport virtually to a standstill. As a special sop to the ruling princes, however, an extra quota of petrol was allotted to them which, in the case of Kutch, enabled freer movement for the bird survey and visits to out-of-the-way places otherwise difficult to reach.

In between camps my party usually spent a couple of days in Bhuj for re-fitting, and each time I was in, the Maharao would invite me to accompany him on his evening drives to some scenic point in the environs of the town and 'take the air'. He was usually alone, attended only by a flunkey armed with a thermos, a bottle of 'pegs' and a supply of pistachios and almonds and things of that sort for His Highness to while away his time pleasantly, while listening to or discussing my report on the progress of the survey. One of the things that struck me as singularly odd at the time—especially coming from a man normally so courteous and considerate—was that never in all these outings did he even once offer me any of the things he was stolidly munching away while the replenishing flunkey stood attentively at his elbow. That it should never have occurred to him to do so seems queer and inconceivable, yet there it was.

I am reminded by a note in my diary of that time of a crude manifestation of the anachronistic feudalism that still persisted in Kutch. I felt outraged, while responding to the Maharao's request to meet him at the palace for some discussion, to discover too late that it was mandatory for 'natives' to alight from their vehicles—whether car or horse carriage—at the main palace gate and cover the fifty yards or so up the drive to the entrance porch on foot. This mandate applied uniformly to all *Indians*, of whatever status, whether residents or visitors, official or non-official. The enormity of the *diktat* was that even the Indian *dewan* (chief minister) of the state visiting His Highness on official business had to 'crawl' in this fashion, while *any* European or Anglo-Indian of howsoever dubious a quality could drive straight up to the porch without let or hindrance, and perhaps even with a welcoming salute from the armed

sentry at the gate. The 'reigning' dewan at the time of my survey, a highly respected senior Indian civilian, had to submit to this perverse indignity, while the lowly Anglo-Indian Customs Inspector could drive right up to the porch. I got a shock when ordered to alight at the main entrance, created a scene, and later protested to the Maharao in no uncertain terms about this insulting iniquity. I hope it had some effect, but I never had occasion to visit the palace a second time.

A peculiar oddity that amused me greatly when observing the intra- and interspecific habits and behaviour of that now-extinct genus—the maharaos, maharajas and nawabs—in the course of my bird surveys of the various Indian states, was the comic ostentation with which the rulers addressed each other, back and forth, as 'Your Highness' in tête-à-tête conversation, even though they might be old friends and contemporaries or close relations. When talking to one of 'lesser breed' some of them took good care, when referring to a brother Highness, to slip in inconsequentially—as though in parenthesis—such vital information as 'He is 13 guns, you know, I am 17' and thereafter run on with the discourse.

Kutch is a chronically drought-prone area, and a succession of bad monsoons will often inhibit breeding of the flamingos for two or three years. The birds need an optimum depth of six to eight inches of shallow inundation on their breeding ground to generate their mound-building activities. If the monsoon has failed or been deficient, this depth is never attained on the nest site. In that case the water leaves the site high and dry before September or October, when the normal breeding season should commence. If the monsoon has been heavy, as in 1944, the water on the site is too deep, and may take a long time to dry to the acceptable depth. Hence, unlike most nesting grounds in Asia, and in Europe, Africa and the New World, the season in Kutch is a moveable feast and unpredictable. It may range anywhere between September/October and March/April or be completely suppressed. The 'city' itself lies deserted the rest of the year, since after the birds have finished breeding they disperse far and wide along with the newly fledged young in small flocks or large feeding concentrations, frequenting

coastal lagoons and salt pans, as at Point Calimere, and in Saurashtra and Sri Lanka. In the non-breeding season they also frequent brackish lakes such as Sambhar in Rajasthan, Chilka in Orissa, and others.

Knowing my special keenness to study the Kutch flamingo and the disappointments I had had on earlier visits to the breeding grounds, the Maharao had a special lookout kept on flamingo movements in the Great Rann. That is how I received an express telegram from him one day in April 1945 while I was in the midst of hectic preparations in Bombay for the birding 'pilgrimage' to Kailas and Manasarovar the following month. The breeding colony—'Flamingo City'—was then at the peak of its activities and I was urged to come immediately. This long-awaited opportunity, coming even at such an awkward moment, was too good to miss. I arrived in Bhuj by air two days later. Air flights were elementary and erratic in the war years and trains were slow and leisurely, involving connections at Viramgam and elsewhere with metre-gauge lines through various Kathiawar principalities, each of which insisted on maintaining a few measly miles of its own railway system, more as a status symbol than anything else. These operated to uncoordinated timings, no doubt to assert their independent status on neighbouring princelings across the fence. Since the states did not subscribe to the fetish of punctuality you were lucky if you sometimes caught your connections. Then, finally, you had to bivouac for the night on the crowded platform at Navlakhi in Jamnagar—a sort of open air dormitory free for all—to take the motor launch across to Kandla in Kutch next morning, followed by four hours in an exasperatingly sluggish narrow-gauge train before you finally arrived in Bhuj, a total of forty hours or so from Bombay.

In Bhuj I had the pleasure of meeting Sir Peter Clutterbuck, a former Inspector-General of Forests in India who had done a stint as Chief Conservator of Forests in Kashmir State after retirement, and was now in Kutch at Maharao Vijayarajji's invitation to reorganize the Forest Department of the state. Throughout his Indian service, Sir Peter had the reputation of being an exceptionally able forest officer and a dedicated

naturalist and conservationist. Though no longer young, he had expressed to the Maharao a keen desire to visit Flamingo City along with me, in spite of the summer heat and physical hardships involved in the journey.

A fairly sybaritic tented camp had been set up by the Kutch durbar for our overnight halt at Nir, which was reached from Bhuj via Khavda, partly by car and partly on camelback (about seventy miles). I recall the acrimonious political key on which my relationship with Sir Peter opened at the tête-à-tête dinner that night—damask tablecloth, silver cutlery, liveried waiters! The years of the World War and the decade or so before, with Mahatma Gandhi and the Satyagraha Movement in operation, had embittered relations between Indians and the British to an unprecedented degree. All the British in India, government servants high and low, as well as the boxwallahs—were scandalized and almost foaming at the mouth over the ‘subversive’ preachings and mischief of that ‘seditionist rat Gandhi’, as Meinertzhagen had called him, and his traitorous henchman Nehru—even after the correct education he had received at Harrow and Cambridge. Earlier in the evening Sir Peter had thus gratuitously started unburdening himself on the subject, and now gave me an unprovoked broadside of the pent-up venom of his spleen. As I have confessed before, I have never been famous for the sweetness of my temper, and here was sufficient provocation for jettisoning restraint. I am afraid perhaps I said more nasty things than the occasion called for, but it did help to clear the atmosphere between Sir Peter Clutterbuck and myself for ever after. I made it plain to him that I had no wish or intention to convert him from his firm convictions, nor would it be worth his while to try to change my views—and that was that; we both had a deep common interest in birds and wildlife, so why not confine ourselves to those topics and leave politics to the politicians? After this first unfortunate but decisive confrontation, I found Sir Peter a singularly charming and delightful companion, and the friendship and mutual regard generated on that flamingo trip endured till his death in about 1958 in England, where I was happy to have met him a few months earlier. The catalyst in our bond of

friendship was partly also his doting son Brigadier J.E. (Jack) Clutterbuck, R.E., who retired from India in 1948 as Chief Engineer of the then G.I.P. Railway after many years of meritorious service, to start a new life in England—farming in Somerset. Jack was to me a kindred spirit, an altogether lovable and admirable character, mad about the Indian jungles where we had spent many happy days together from time to time camping, shooting, trekking and naturalizing. He was one of my closest and most cherished English friends.

The traditional Flamingo City—the same as used by the birds year after year at least since 1896 when first reported—lies some 10 kilometres north-east of Nir (at the tip of Pachham Island), out in the pancake-flat featureless Rann. To reach the place one has to wade on foot or ride on local ponies or camels which skid and slither alarmingly through the ankle- to thigh-deep water, more or less concentrated brine, of over-soft, slippery slush often overlaid by a deceptive crust or razor-sharp salt crystals like splintered glass. Under the intense desert sun it produces the blinding glare of freshly fallen snow. The fetlocks of the ponies sometimes get badly lacerated as the hoofs sink through the crunchy surface. Thankfully, the April heat felt less oppressive than the 45°C+ shown by the thermometer, because a cool breeze blew throughout the day and even made a cotton coverlet distinctly welcome at night in our open-to-sky bivouac. This was, and still remains, the only occasion it was possible to make a fairly accurate physical count of the population of Flamingo City in a peak breeding year, and to observe something of the nocturnal movements and behaviour of the birds, for it was a period of brilliant moonlight with a clear sky and optimal conditions. However, the lack of fresh water at the site, and of fuel for cooking and fodder of any kind for the riding and draft animals, made a longer stay than our two nights ‘on location’ impossible. This would necessitate elaborate and carefully planned previous *bandobast*. After measuring out the total area of the colony on the ground and randomly demarcating several ‘built up’ sample plots of about 90 metres × 90 metres each, and allowing for the bald (unbuilt) patches in between the nest clusters, I calculated

the total number of occupied nests in the 'city' to be 104,758. On the basis of this figure, and taking two adults to each nest and two young to every three nests, plus the hordes of non-breeding adults and sub-adults around the colony, the total population would probably be of the order of half a million birds. This would undoubtedly make Flamingo City the largest breeding colony of the Greater Flamingo in Asia, and at least *one* of the largest in the world. I have long realized the potential of the Great Rann of Kutch as an area for biological surprises, justifying a full-scale scientific exploration, and regretted not being able to carry out a more thorough and extensive survey myself. On a subsequent visit to Flamingo City I was lucky to discover a colony of Avocets (*Recurvirostra avosetta*) breeding in its 'suburbs'—the first ever record for the subcontinent—and on another visit a few years later a nesting colony of Rosy Pelicans (*Pelecanus onocrotalus*)—also the first—among the worn-down disused flamingo nests on the periphery.

To make doubly sure that the camera he had lent me (to replace mine which had developed a last-minute hitch) behaved as it should in my hands, Maharao Vijayarajji had considerably sent out from Bhuj the state photographer, Ali Mohammad, with complete paraphernalia and a special assistant, whose function was not immediately apparent. The two photographers and their equipment made up two complete camel loads. The vintage apparatus—a full-plate studio camera of solid teakwood, enormous proportions and cumbrousness—looked like some antique piece of furniture from the period of William the Conqueror or thereabouts. It had no mechanical shutter but worked by smartly doffing and donning a cap over the lens with the photographer's hand. In open sunshine, despite the operator's lightning sleights-of-hand, the comparatively slow plates, and the diaphragm shut down to a pinpoint, the negatives were often somewhat overexposed. It was obviously a camera with a history, and quite believably the same as made the original picture published in the *Journal* of the BNHS by Maharao Khengarji in 1896 giving positive evidence of flamingos breeding in the Rann. The apparatus not only needed two able-bodied men to rig it up for action on its

massive wooden tripod, but also for its complicated co-operative operation. It was worked like a ship, and this is where the trained assistant became indispensable. The chief photographer (the Captain) had to enshroud his head in yards of black cloth, eyes glued to the focussing screen. From this position—the 'bridge'—he signalled orders down to the 'engine room', as it were, to the assistant in front, to twiddle the focussing knob a trifle this way or that to get the correct focus. The focussing knob was out of reach of the Captain himself and only a specially trained assistant could assist. The camera erected at the nest colony, 'on location', showed up from afar in the vast expanse as a fair-sized house, and, when a wind sprang up and the black shroud round the Captain's head began to flutter and flap, I thought there could be no earthly chance of getting any photographs of the birds. I am afraid at that point I also became rather uncharitably facetious at the Captain's expense, but he bore it all with surprising good humour. It was not until we got back to Bhuj and he produced the most unexpectedly good results from his dark room that I realized the laugh had really been on me, and that it needs something more than a good camera to produce a good photograph.

An edition of 1,000 copies of *The Birds of Kutch* with twenty colour plates by D.V. Cowen, fully funded by the Kutch durbar, was published by Oxford University Press for the Government of Kutch in 1945, under severe wartime constraints. It was acclaimed by reviewers in India and abroad. Five hundred copies of the book were retained by the Maharao for presentation to his state guests. Unfortunately, these copies were carelessly stored in a damp cellar where most were destroyed by white ants. The publication was priced at a nominal Rs 20 per copy and the edition was soon exhausted, second-hand copies fetching up to \$100 thereafter.

One of our camps during the Kutch bird survey was in a tiny godforsaken desert village of a few down-and-out hovels called Rapar on the easternmost edge of the state, bordering on the Little Rann. The only comparatively substantial building within its mud-walled 'fort' was the police station manned by a couple of policemen and their camels for patrolling the area, and a

single *puggee* whose main job was to walk round the village in the early morning and at evening dusk, eyes on the ground, to monitor the footprints of any strangers, human or camel, that may have entered or left the village since the last scrutiny. The station house had been cleared for our use by orders from above. It was at Rapar that we first came across this very remarkable tribe of hereditary trackers (*puggee* from 'pug', meaning foot, or footprint). They are as familiar with the footprints of the inhabitants of a village as with their faces, and can tell with absolute confidence whether particular footprints, human or camel, belong to a resident or to a visiting outsider. In desert areas where camel-stealing is one of the favourite local pastimes, this accomplishment is of the greatest help to the police in tracking down not only lost or stolen camels, but also camel thieves and other criminals. One or two such *puggees* formed the normal complement of every remote police outpost. The hereditary expertise these professional trackers have acquired through generations is phenomenal and truly amazing.

Khan Bahadur Malcolm Kothavala, the Inspector-General of Police in Kutch at the time of the survey, who had unmatched experience of *puggees* in the various desert states of Rajputana where he had served, related the case of a camel stolen from a border village like Rapar. This camel had a very slight limp in its left foreleg and its footprints were in consequence distinctive, but only for the local *puggee*. One night the camel disappeared along with a stranger who, as the ground monitoring had shown, had entered the village the day before. The village *puggee* got on the trail and followed the camel led by the stranger for several miles beyond the village till the ground became too hard and stony for any clues, and the trail was lost. Two years later this *puggee* took leave to go to his village miles away but in the same direction as the camel he had followed. While moving around his village, like a busman on holiday, he happened upon a camel's footprints which he confidently identified as those of the animal he had trailed two years before, but the footprints of the man leading it were different. Anyhow, he followed the spoor to its owner's house. On

questioning the man it turned out that he had purchased the animal from its former owner a few months earlier. The seller was traced and from his footprints the *puggee* confirmed his identification as the person who had led the camel away from its native village. After the normal gentle third-degree persuasion, the thief confessed. Both he and the purchaser of stolen property got it in the neck, and the camel was restored to its rightful owner in its rightful village. The Khan Bahadur had many other stories of the phenomenal feats of tracking performed by these simple untutored folk, with the skill passed down from father to son through countless generations. It is a pity that, with increasing sophistication in methods of crime detection, the *puggees* are fast losing their importance as well as the skill and expertise they have acquired through the ages—and with it their jobs and livelihood.

In 1945, R.I. Pocock, who was revising the Mammalia volumes of the Fauna of British India series, wrote to the BNHS asking whether it could arrange to obtain a few fresh specimens of the Kutch wild ass for critical study, since adequate material was lacking in the British Museum (Natural History). Maharao Vijayarajji, with his accustomed generosity, offered to provide all facilities to the Society for a collecting expedition in the Little Rann, which is the stronghold of this animal. I was doing the bird survey of Gujarat at the time (March 1946) and was glad to avail of the opportunity for a closer acquaintance with this rare and interesting animal, the ecology and biology of which was so little known. It would also give me a chance to investigate the birds of the Little Rann which I had missed during the Kutch survey, and long suspected to be the only breeding ground of the Lesser Flamingo (*Phoeniconaias minor*) in the Indian region.

A narrative of the wild ass expedition with field notes on the habits and food, etc., of the species, together with measurements and other details of the five specimens collected, is published in the *Journal* of the BNHS 46: 472–77 (1946). To weigh the animals in the field a rough-and-ready beam scale had to be improvised, hung from a tree with a wild ass at one end and three or four domestic ones (i.e. my camp followers!)

at the other. The latter were subsequently weighed individually on a standard weighing machine and tolerably accurate weights of the animals obtained. The trip proved highly rewarding also from the ornithological angle. We fortuitously struck a vast open expanse of shallow brackish water in the debouchment of the Banas river into the Rann, where there was a heavier concentration of migratory ducks, waders and other birds than I had ever seen before or have since—duck by the million darkening the water for miles, the majority apparently Common Teal (*Anas crecca*) with a sprinkling of hordes of Shovellers (*Spatula clypeata*), and doubtless many other species not distinguishable in the distance. Besides these, there were some eighty Rosy Pelicans and three to five lakh Lesser Flamingo (*Phoeniconaias minor*) (no Greater), countless thousands of sandpipers, stints, redshanks, greenshanks and others; also thousands of Common and Demoiselle Cranes, all apparently collecting for the outward migration. Unfortunately I never had a chance to visit this place at the proper time again.

15

Bharatpur

Before 1935 I only knew the 'Ghana' of Bharatpur by its reputation as a phenomenal private duck-shooting reserve of the maharajas and their elite VIP guests. That year, at my bidding, my friend Prater, Curator of the BNHS, wrote to Sir Richard Tottenham, ICS, a keen naturalist-sportsman member of the Society, to enquire what facilities would be available from the state for setting up a pilot wildfowl ringing centre at the famous Keoladeo Ghana *jheel*. Sir Richard was the Administrator of the state during the minority of Maharaja Brijendra Singh, and the High Panjandrum whose word was law. That is how I got my earliest introduction to this fabulous wetland which has since become one of my most regular stamping grounds, and in the process developed into the Society's chief centre for the study of bird migration in India. Prior to that time practically no bird ringing had been done in the subcontinent, barring the pioneering experiment in Dhar State (now in Madhya Pradesh) in 1926 by the enterprising ruler, Maharaja Sir Uday Singh Puar. Aluminium rings bearing the legend 'Inform Maharaja Dhar' had to be specially hand-crafted for him by the BNHS (in the proverbial style of the early Rolls Royce engines). It was a slow and laborious job as strips of appropriate sizes had to be cut from the metal sheet, their sharp edges filed smooth, and the legend and serial number manually punched, letter by letter, from steel dies. Under the circumstances the operation could only be on a very limited scale. Despite this the recoveries reported from such distant places as Turkestan, Siberia, and other parts of the USSR were

so exciting and encouraging that I was determined to have the BNHS take up bird ringing as one of its major field activities if and when funds and facilities ever made it possible. Using the Dhar success as a lure the Society was able, through the good offices of some of its civilian members in the Sind administration, then a part of Bombay Presidency, to persuade a handful of affluent sporting zamindars to take up the ringing of migratory ducks. But here again the bottleneck was the ring supply. Rings marked 'Inform Bombay Nat. Hist. Society' had still to be manually prepared and were sparingly available. In spite of the modest scale on which ringing was done in Sind the recoveries were gratifying beyond expectation.

It was a long wait, but 'possibility' did drop into our lap fortuitously and unsolicited, via the World Health Organization. Around the year 1957 there erupted an apparently new form of encephalitis in the Kyasanur forest area of Karnataka (South India), affecting villagers and monkeys, sometimes fatally. The tick-borne virus of this encephalitis (known as 'Monkey Disease' or KFD) was reported by the Virus Research Centre, Pune, to be closely related to Omsk Haemorrhagic Fever and the Russian Spring-Summer Encephalitis (RSS) complex. The apparently transcontinental distribution of the virus suggested that it could have reached here through the agency of ticks on birds migrating between USSR and India, and the WHO seriously seized upon the problem. In March 1959 I was invited to a meeting in Geneva of a 'Scientific Group on Research on Birds as Disseminators of Arthropod-borne Viruses', with the project proposal prepared at their request for the study of bird migration in Kutch and north-west India. The proposal was warmly approved, and with financial support from WHO the first-ever organized scheme for bird ringing and migration study in the subcontinent was launched. This is the genesis of the Society's Bird Migration Project, a study of which the seed was well and truly implanted in me during the visit to the Ornithological Observatory at Heligoland in 1929.

Up to the mid-sixties the WHO was itself receiving substantial financial aid from the US government for its wide-ranging public health research programmes, chiefly in underdeveloped

countries. After three or four years WHO's funding to the BNHS ceased. Because of its massive involvement and commitments in the Korean war the US was obliged to prune its research grants drastically, which in turn brought the BNHS under the axe. The Society's bird ringing project was seriously jeopardized, and it would certainly have collapsed but for the timely intervention at that point of the Smithsonian Institution in Washington. They considerately took over the funding for the interim period of uncertainty, followed fortuitously by the dropping from the blue of a totally unlooked-for source.

At that time the US Army Medical Research Laboratory, a component of SEATO with headquarters at Bangkok, was conducting a massive bird ringing programme known as MAPS (Migratory Animals Pathological Survey) in South-East Asian countries like Japan, the Philippines, Thailand, Malaya, Indonesia and Taiwan. MAPS was anxious to extend its activities to India, where the excellent performance of the BNHS in bird migration study had been commended to it by both the WHO and the Smithsonian. The overall MAPS programme was directed and co-ordinated by the ebullient and dynamic American ornithologist Dr H. Elliott McClure, an extrovert with whom it was a pleasure and an education to work. I have always been a stickler for the utmost economy in the handling of institutional funds. Therefore I was bucked no end when McClure expressed to me later his amazement and appreciation of the Society's performance in terms of birds ringed to dollars spent, as compared with the other South-East Asian countries MAPS was financing.

The bulk of the funds for the MAPS project came from the US Army Research and Development Group (Far East), Japan. MAPS had been following the BNHS's ringing work in India with interest and acclaim, and on learning of the possibility of its having to be wound up promptly offered to step in with the funding on condition that our data and results would be made available to it to complete its own information. That seemed fair enough, and I did not at the time suspect that such a useful scientific collaboration could or would land the Society and me personally as Chief Investigator in so much unpleasantness and adverse publicity.

It seems that an enterprising journalist, styling himself 'Scientific Correspondent' of some north-Indian newspaper, had got wind of the Society's ringing collaboration with MAPS. He came out on his own with a highly imaginative alarmist story, imputing that the Society was in this way colluding with the United States to explore the possibility of migratory birds being used in biological warfare for inducting and disseminating deadly viruses and germs in enemy countries. Since our migrant birds came chiefly from the USSR, and possibly also China, this lent credibility to the report in view of the Cold War, which had hotted up considerably about that time. The report caused a furore in Delhi's political circles and generated much heat and noise among our pro-communist, anti-US 'patriots' in the Lok Sabha. The outcry resulted in two successive enquiry committees, both of which fully absolved the Society and the project director Salim Ali of criminal intent or subversive action. But the MPs remained unconvinced. In order to stop the noise and clear lingering doubts and suspicion once and for all, the government appointed a third so-called 'high power' committee of three top-ranking scientists, one each from the Virus Research Centre (VRC), Pune, the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (TIFR), Bombay, and the Zoological Survey of India (ZSI), Calcutta, to review the matter thoroughly and *de novo*. It was not till their verdict fully endorsed the earlier findings that the Society regained its credibility and public image. However, during the two years or so that the hullabaloo was on, our migration study had practically come to an end for want of funds, the MAPS project itself having terminated meanwhile. To avoid a repetition of similar awkward incidents the government decided that the entire funding for all collaborative projects approved by it would in future be undertaken by itself on a request from the American collaborating agency from the counterpart rupee funds held in India under the PL 480 scheme.

With the resumption of funding from this source the Society's ringing programme was resuscitated and expanded to cover the ecology and movements of the avifauna, both resident and migratory. Our bird migration research programme and

the practical training in field work it has afforded to the numerous young postgraduate biologists involved in it—some of whom have won higher university degrees in zoology by research in Field Ornithology under the Society's guidance—is among the more cherished satisfactions I have derived from my long association with the BNHS. So far (1983) we have been able to absorb most of our own products as research biologists on this and two other ongoing five-year collaborative projects with the Fish and Wildlife Service of the US Department of the Interior. A third project to study the ecology of the bird strike hazard at Indian aerodromes, also under way, is sponsored and funded fully by the Government of India through the Aeronautics Research & Development Board of the Ministry of Defence. In the three decades of its operation the bird migration project has produced information which enables guesswork to be replaced by solid factual data of great scientific value concerning bird migration in India.

Before the WHO funding for the BNHS's regular bird migration studies became available I had timed my annual visits to Bharatpur to coincide with the nesting season of the resident water birds—storks, herons, egrets, cormorants, ibises, spoonbills and others—which breed in the Ghana in such densely packed mixed heronries. Their movements within the country, and of some even beyond, are little understood. With the friendly co-operation of the Maharaja and the assistance of his shikaris and game guards, I had managed each year to ring several hundred nestlings with our hand-punched rings. Some tell-tale and highly interesting information was provided even by the scanty recoveries, often at unexpectedly distant places. Naturally the tally was not impressive. It was only after we had access to free supplies of rings of assorted sizes from specialist suppliers in Sweden, and to mist nets from Japan, that large-scale ringing got under way. For the first five years or so our attention was mostly confined to land birds, chiefly gallinaceous and passerine, specially the ground feeding forms—the potential hosts of ticks. Serious duck ringing could only be taken up much later, because the locals at Bharatpur and in the other localities of operation were unskilled in catching ducks

and other waterfowl in a sufficiently big way. It was only after our discovery of the expert Bihari professional trappers of the Sahni and Mirshikar tribes, and their almost disastrously successful catching methods, that large-scale waterbird ringing became possible.

Before it became a waterbird sanctuary and then a National Park, Keoladeo Ghana was the fantastic private duck-shooting preserve of the Bharatpur rulers. As long as the present Maharaja retained his powers there was no question or thought on his part of voluntarily giving up his shooting rights and converting it into a sanctuary. Apart from his casual shooting of a few ducks for sport and the table, he traditionally used to lay on three or four big shoots every season to which all sorts of VIPs and some less than V were invited—viceroys, governors, top civil and military brass, and brother princes from other states. Numbered butts were allotted to the guns, distributed in strategic spots all over the lake. The whole operation worked with the mechanical precision of an army manoeuvre, with men of the state forces drilled as beaters to keep the birds moving over the guns and not letting them settle. Enormous holocausts were 'accomplished' at some of these gargantuan shoots, and there are several records of two to three thousand birds killed in a single day, and three records even of over four thousand. The all-time record bag of 4,273 ducks and geese to 38 guns for Keoladeo Ghana was made in November 1938, with Lord Linlithgow, the ruling viceroy, as the presiding slayer. Although the lord sahib's own contribution to the bag was not impressive, he did distinguish himself by creating what must surely be a world record, of firing 1,900 rounds of 12-bore ammunition from his own shoulder on that day. Only one who has let off even a paltry hundred shots in a morning's snipe shoot and got his shoulder black and blue will appreciate the magnitude of this almost superhuman performance, even after making due allowance for his lordship's considerable weight and substance.

What gives to the Ghana its unique distinction as a bird-watcher's haunt is not only the fantastic concentration and diversity of species of both resident and migratory waterbirds

at the appropriate seasons, but the uncommonly extended period of half a year or more at a stretch over which bird-watching can be enjoyed here. In a season of normal monsoon, residents such as storks, egrets, cormorants, etc. commence breeding in August. By November, before the parents and young have evacuated the heronries, the influx of the migrant ducks and geese has begun, which continues till end-November, by when the migrants have completely taken over. The prolonged unbroken period for the watching of water birds is a feature which is perhaps unequalled elsewhere in the world. This is what makes Keoladeo National Park such an ideal venue for the nature tourist and bird photographer—a questionable advantage from the conservation point of view!

The youthful and enthusiastic K.P.S. Menon, ICS, a great friend and admirer of my brother Hamid, took over from Sir Richard Tottenham as Administrator of Bharatpur State in 1936 or thereabouts. I remember how thrilled and delighted he and his twin daughters, then aged about twelve, were to punt out with me on the *jheel* in those wobbly iron 'tubs' to handle and ring the baby storks and egrets in the nests.

Another unique feature which has made Keoladeo Ghana world famous is the fact that it is the only wetland in the subcontinent where small numbers of the rare and exquisitely beautiful snow-white Siberian Cranes winter, in spite of the many other superficially identical wetland habitats with which Uttar Pradesh and the Indo-Gangetic Plain are studded. Whether it is some special food item not found in the other *jheels* that restricts the bird to Keoladeo, or what, is not known. And since the species is now included in Schedule 1 of the Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972 (Totally Protected) it is unlikely we shall ever get to know this from examination of stomach contents. My first meeting with the Siberian Crane occurred in 1937 when collecting mallophaga (feather lice) at Keoladeo with Meinertzhagen for his special study. A flock of eleven birds had arrived, of which I shot one. The bird, unfortunately, had no mallophaga on it, but we preserved its stomach contents, which consisted almost exclusively of the corms of *Cyperus* grass, of which several species occur in the

wetland. These were to be identified specifically at Kew, but the identification somehow never got done. Thus, whether or not the bird is so choosy about its winter habitat due to the food factor remains a mystery. We were also collecting mallophaga from raptors (birds of prey) at the same time, and a note in Meinertzhagen's diary indicates how dramatically the population of this group of birds had declined in the interval since then. The entry reads: 'Bharatpur, 2.3.1937. After breakfast shot 2 Spotted, 2 Pallas's, 2 Imperial, 1 Tawny, 1 *Spilornis*, 1 *Circaetus*. I might have shot a dozen of each if I had wished to.' It is surprising he didn't!

In the deed of transfer of power from Bharatpur State to the Centre at the time of India's Independence, the Maharaja had insisted on inserting a clause that he would be allowed to retain the exclusive right of shooting in the Ghana for himself and his friends. In view of other more important issues involved, this concession was readily conceded by the government. However, the Maharaja's policy of continuing to shoot while denying this privilege to the general public was deeply resented by the powerful anti-maharaja party of the state, which was prepared to go to great lengths to punish him for alleged misdeeds and injustices in the past. They had whipped up an agitation alleging that he was holding on to the Ghana solely for his selfish pleasure and to entertain influential friends at court in Delhi, and thereby wickedly depriving the poor land-starved ryots of good cultivable land and the water they so badly needed for their crops. With the backing of crooked politicians complete physical devastation of the Ghana was plotted, and indeed was imminent, when quite by chance I got wind of the plot. I happened to be at Bharatpur then with two eminent ornithologist friends, Horace Alexander, the well-known Quaker ('Quacker' as one newspaper spelled it), and General Sir Harold Williams, Chief Engineer of the Indian Army at the time. All three of us knew Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru quite well and knew also of his deep personal love of nature. We apprised him urgently of what was afoot and craved his immediate intervention to stall the vandalism. And it was Jawaharlal's prompt and positive response that saved the teetering Ghana

from the brink. Through Rafi Ahmad Kidwai, his energetic and sympathetic Minister of Agriculture & Irrigation, he had the charges of deprivation of land and water examined and reconciled by experts of his ministry to the satisfaction of all concerned. And in due course the headstrong Maharaja was coaxed and morally pressurized into surrendering his shooting rights. Thus was the Ghana saved from certain annihilation, and it stands today as one of the world's most fabulous waterfowl resorts.

Bastar 1949

Bastar and Kanker were two of the tribal states in the Eastern States Agency under the Raj, in an area that was little known biologically up to the time of my bird survey in 1949, and therefore a specially tantalizing blank for the field naturalist. Two years after India's Independence the rajas were still on the *gaddis* which had become decidedly shaky in the uncertainty of their future. It was still very wild country and comparatively unaffected by the processes of 'civilization', 'development' and prudery against female toplessness which was the normal tribal regime. Happily, Bastar then was a very different place from what it has since become vandalized into, especially after the Japanese got scent of the vast iron ore deposits of Bailadila. All-year motorable roads, dusty and untarred, were few and far between, and of a strictly arterial nature. Most of the communication was by a scanty and irregular private bus service, otherwise by bullock cart, over fair-weather forest roads or rutted cross-country tracks that were really *kutchas*, including the straw-and-bamboo makeshift bridges over the forest streams which often got washed away in the flash floods of the monsoon. Except for a few tired army disposal jeeps, four-wheel-drive vehicles were unavailable. When the water in the streams was low, the Loke station-wagon often got stuck in the loose sand bordering them or sunk down to the footboards in mid-stream, whence it had to be pushed and hauled out by manpower if available—usually timber cartmen stranded in like cases. After bitter experience of this sort I learnt to carry with me as standard equipment on the wagon a couple of

shovels and a roll of chicken wire-netting to spread over the sand and prevent the wheels from churning in. It saved us many an unpleasant hour of fruitless scouting for help. Another unpleasant experience taught me to carry a bicycle, by way of a life-boat, strapped in special brackets on the roof of the vehicle.

It happened one afternoon while driving between a largish village called Geedam, and Jagdalpur, the capital of Bastar State, that in negotiating a particularly bad stretch of road with more than thirty kilometres still to go, the axle gave way and one of the back wheels flew off, dragging the lopsided truck almost into a roadside ditch. A single bus belonging to a local operator used to shuttle past this spot once every alternate day. We had met it going in the opposite direction earlier that morning, so expected that as per schedule it would return on the morrow. It was now late in the afternoon and the only thing to do was to unload the vehicle and set up a bivouac in a nearby open plot, make ourselves at home for the night and hope for the bus to return next morning. After breakfast the beddings, camp cots, cooking utensils, buckets, lanterns and everything else were hurriedly repacked while we waited patiently for the bus to turn up. When there was no bus in either direction by sunset we knew that something had gone wrong and opened up everything again and resigned ourselves to spending one more night in discomfort and some anxiety.

A man-eating tiger had been reported in the area, on account of which all the bullock-cart traffic had also come to be suspended for over a week. The process of unpacking in the evening and repacking next morning and waiting patiently was repeated, but as there was still no bus in either direction till dusk, no means of sending an SOS to Jagdalpur, and the prospect of the same uncertainty on the morrow, I decided to leave the gypsy camp in care of Gabriel and the cook, and foot-slog to Jagdalpur when it got a little cooler after midnight. So at two o'clock next morning, taking advantage of the brilliant moonlight, accompanied by the second skinner, Anthony DeSouza (a tough young Goan refugee from East Africa), the loaded Mauser slung on my shoulder, we started to walk. The road ran through dense mixed bamboo and *sal* forest

known to be the beat of the tiger who had claimed his last victim in that neighbourhood only ten days earlier. I realize now that it was a rash thing to do, as the rifle could have served no useful purpose in a sudden eventuality. It was an eerie and nerve-racking experience as every imaginary movement of a shadow felt like being stalked. But there seemed to be no end to this waiting for some form of transport to turn up, and the sun was so fierce that the prospect of a long trudge during daytime was not appealing. I was sorry for poor Anthony DeSouza whose feet had got sore and were bleeding from shoe bite while still many miles from our destination. But he could not be left behind to follow on his own with the bogey of a hungry tiger around, and he had to be hustled along in spite of his painful predicament. I reached Jagdalpur at about eight in the morning, having covered the distance in about six hours of non-stop marching, no doubt urged on from behind by the imaginary man-eater. The friendly manager of the bus company, one Mr Krishnaswami (or Krishnamurti?) provided us with a breakfast that remains memorable for the delicious home-made *idlees* with honey, which tasted like manna from heaven under the circumstances, washed down with genuine 'by-the-yard' Madras coffee. The manager soon provided a relief vehicle and his expert workshop foreman to tow the derelict station-wagon in, and after a couple of days of tinkering and hammering we were on our way again.

It is small wonder that even at that time, although the forests were in a less mauled condition than now, wildlife of every description had been reduced to such a deplorable state that a spate of man-eating tigers had begun infesting the region. The tribal Bhils, one and all, were expert trackers and all-year hunters with locally made muzzle-loaders and bows and arrows. In addition to this, there are the traditional pre-sowing *parads* or community *battues* every year in which all the able-bodied men from tribal hamlets miles around join to beat out vast tracts of jungle and slaughter everything that moves, big or small, whether mammal, bird or reptile. These hunts are to propitiate the spirits of the forest and ensure a good harvest, and the destructive practice continues unchecked in spite of prohibitory forest laws.

An example of the Bhils's expertness as hunters was given me by a tribal who I had engaged as a jungle guide during the Bastar bird survey. Up till that time the magnificent Great Black Woodpecker (*Dryocopus javensis*) was known to occur only in the Western Ghats south of Belgaum. The distribution given by Stuart Baker in the *New Fauna*, our standard reference book at the time, was 'Travancore to Belgaum on the western coast of South India'. However, since its publication, the Gujarat bird survey had extended the distribution northward along the Western Ghats to the Surat Dangs (adjoining Khandesh). All the same, I was very surprised and intrigued to come across a large black woodpecker in a patch of overgrown secondary jungle in this distant part of central India, and was anxious to collect the specimen to establish its identity. The bird was excessively shy and alert, and kept moving away and from tree to tree, well out of gunshot. After half an hour or so of fruitless and exhausting chase, and afraid of losing the specimen, I offered my Bhil attendant a fortune of five rupees if he brought me that bird. The man took my gun and slunk off through the dense, thorny undergrowth. Within five minutes I heard a shot and in the next two the specimen was in my hand! He assured me that this large woodpecker—locally known as *Bhainsa-khidree*—was not very uncommon in that area and that both the bird and its squabs, avidly robbed from nest-holes, were very good eating—which made sense of the bird's inordinate shyness. Hornbills and other hole-nesting birds were also becoming scarce for the same reason. The extension of the range of the Black Woodpecker, and some others hitherto considered predominantly Western Ghat forms, right across continental India to the Eastern Ghats, is among the significant findings of the Bastar/Kanker bird survey. It makes an important addition to the species with Malayan affinities found in Kerala and humid south-western India, which has a distinct relevance to Hora's 'Satpura Hypothesis' referred to earlier.

The adjacent 'native' states of the Eastern States Agency, which came next in my series of regional bird surveys, were Mayurbhanj, Badrama, Bamra, Korea, Keonjhar, Nilgiri, Dhenkanal, and several others. With their merger and re-organization they had all been absorbed in the adjoining states

of the Indian Union, namely, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra and Orissa. In spite of the reckless damage done to the forests, particularly of the smaller states, by timber lessees and over-exploitation by rapacious forest contractors, the forest—mostly *sal*—were by and large in good condition, though large areas had been badly degraded through years of shifting cultivation (*jhoom*) which was the tribals' normal practice in the hilly tracts. Mayurbhanj was perhaps the largest and best organized of the Agency states and contained some magnificent forest with an abundance of wildlife. Simlipal, one of the finest game preserves of the Maharaja, is now one of our best-stocked tiger reserves.

The Maharaja of Sarguja's sole commitment to his subjects throughout a long life seems to have been to slay tigers, not only in his own state but from wherever around that he got *khabar*. He died sometime in the seventies with what must surely be an all-time record of 1,170-plus tigers on his conscience, if any. I recall that once, while I was visiting the Kanha Wildlife Sanctuary before its graduation into a National Park, somewhere in the sixties, this Maharaja, who had taken an adjoining shooting block, drove round one afternoon to say 'howdo', beaming with joy and self-satisfaction, and announced to me that it was the happiest day of his life because he had shot his eleven hundredth tiger that morning. After offering due felicitation I asked how he managed to hold the rifle steady, since I could see he was suffering from some sort of palsy and his hands were shaking like leaves in a storm. His Highness, it seems, got just as much fun in slaying a tiger by resting his weapon on the railing of his *machan*. Truly there is no accounting for tastes. When asked by an admiring visitor some months later how many tigers he had bagged altogether, his Highness replied '1,140 *only*', emphasizing 'only' with some degree of self-pity.

A brother Highness from the same group of states, namely him of Korea (eastern Madhya Pradesh), has earned unenviable immortality by sportingly gunning down all of the three last remaining wild cheetahs in a single night from a jeep, aided by blinding headlights, thus successfully wiping out the species for all time from Indian soil.

Motorcycling in Europe

I have been an ardent motorcycle addict ever since I first rode the 3.5 h.p. NSU belonging to a Zerbadi friend, L.M. Madar, in Tavoy, soon after I arrived there in late 1914. My passion for motorcycles and motorcycling has grown with the years. Even after I was finally persuaded to retire from this form of exhilaration in 1964 at the age of sixty-eight, following upon several narrow shaves in the mounting chaos of Bombay traffic, and even after the wrench of parting with my last machine—a 1949 model 500 c.c. twin cylinder shaft-driven Sunbeam—I have never ceased to be thrilled by the sight and music of a BMW streaking past. Alas, owing to restrictions on the import of foreign-made automobiles and motorcycles soon after Independence, it is now rarely that one sees the more aristocratic thoroughbreds on Indian roads, except for an occasional vintage model. The plebeian lesser breeds, the Rajdoots, Jawas, and even their big brothers of the Enfield family, fail to touch the chord. It is therefore only on the rare occasion when I travel abroad that I am able to satisfy the craving, and then I make every effort not to miss any motorcycle shows that might be on. In my callower days in Burma practically all my reading consisted of motorcycle journals and books and periodicals on birds, general natural history and big-game hunting, especially relating to India.

The first motorcycle I actually possessed—at least partly, since it was the property of our Tavoy business firm J.A. Ali Bros. & Co.—was in 1915. It was a 3.5 h.p. twin cylinder 'Zenith', a belt-driven machine without a gear box but with a

clever device known as Gradua Gear, advertised as 'Invincible, All-conquering'. The device was intended to reduce the diameter of the driving pulley on the engine, by which a wide sliding range of gear ratios could be obtained between the high and low. It was operated by winding a horizontal arm with a knob situated above the petrol tank in the manner of a tramcar's brake handle. Since then I have had Harley Davidsons (three models of different horsepowers), a Douglas, Scott (twin-cylinder water-cooled two-stroke), a New Hudson, and others for short periods, and last and most beloved of all the Sunbeam on which I closed my motorcycling career. It is my everlasting regret that I never managed to possess a BMW to die happy! I was deeply absorbed in the refinements and improvements in the designs of motorcycle engines from year to year, and avidly followed the specifications and road-test reports in the specialist journals and manufacturers' catalogues. In the early days I revelled in tinkering with my machines, tuning up or otherwise needlessly meddling with the engine instead of leaving well alone, often taking it apart completely on holidays and putting it back again, getting besmeared with grime and oil and grease in the process. And I often wondered in the end, when left with a handful of extra bolts and screws and cotter pins and washers, why the manufacturers had been so generous as to put them in at all when they seemed so obviously dispensable. I prided myself greatly on the maintenance of my machines, both the engine and the exterior, spending long hours every weekend by way of relaxation in the spit and polish of shiny metal parts and waxing the paint, and deriving considerable satisfaction from the envy of less finicky but perhaps wiser fellow enthusiasts.

In 1950 the BNHS, as whose curator and editor of publications I functioned since Prater and McCann emigrated abroad soon after Independence—the former to settle in the UK and the latter in New Zealand—raised a fund from amongst its members to meet the cost of sending me as India's unofficial delegate to the International Ornithological Congress in Uppsala, Sweden. This was the first to be held after World War II, which had badly disrupted international contacts between ornithologists, and the reunion was looked forward to with joyful anticipation.

The Congress was to take place in June in Sweden since it was one of the few European countries that had escaped practically unscathed from the devastation of the War. The venue was the beautiful university town of Uppsala, the birthplace of Carl Linnaeus, the father of the modern system of biological nomenclature. I left Bombay by the P. & O. *SS Stratheden* on 4 May 1950, accompanied by the Sunbeam. On the latter I planned to do a grand tour of England and the Continent, visiting widely scattered friends retired from India, as well as nature reserves and places of natural history and conservation interest, especially related to birds. In spite of the gratuitous advice of well-wishers and the forebodings of doomsayers, the plan proved to be a wise decision, thoroughly worthwhile and enjoyable in every way, and above all a far less expensive and more convenient method of getting around than any other—especially under the rather chaotic post-War conditions of public transport at the time. It left me independent of time-bound itineraries and forward booking of hotels, railways and buses, etc. that render last-minute changes difficult or impossible, and bind one down to the slavery of time-schedules. On steaming into Liverpool Street Railway Station from Tilbury Docks, where I had expected to be met by my ornithological friend and prospective London host, Meinertzhagen, I was positively bewildered by the sea of humanity that surged on the platform to receive the train-load, and was wondering to myself how the two needles would ever find each other in this vast human haystack.

Pushing and elbowing my way rather aimlessly through this motley crowd I noticed in the distance a tall thin figure, erect like a flagstaff, head and shoulders above the jostling throng. With his usual thoughtfulness and originality Meinertzhagen had hired a soapbox and installed himself prominently upon it; this is how we discovered each other! Meinertzhagen lived in a three-storeyed semi-detached Victorian building bordering Kensington Park Gardens, a once aristocratic locality, with his magnificent research collection of several thousand bird skins made in practically every corner of the world during more than half a century. The majority of the skins, prepared with his

own hands with characteristic thoroughness and excellence, all meticulously labelled and catalogued, are a joy to handle and study. Meinertzhagen's wife, Annie Jackson, also an ornithologist of some distinction, had died in a revolver accident (evil minds find it thinkable it may have been contrived!) in 1928 or thereabouts, and at the time of my visit he had living with him a very attractive young niece, Theresa Clay, about thirty, an entomologist working in the South Kensington Museum and later to become an internationally recognized authority on mallophaga.

No. 17 Kensington Park Gardens formed part of a row of connected buildings of uniform baroque architecture, a style fashionable in London in the second half of the nineteenth century. Its colonnaded front entrance was on the street and the back entrance led from an enclosed courtyard-like garden, commonly shared by all the residents of the rows of similar semi-detached houses on the other three sides. It was early in the month of June and the famous annual Derby race was imminent. It was apparently a traditional ritual with Meinertzhagen to invite a number of his closest friends to picnic lunch and merrymaking with him at Epsom on Derby Day, and I was lucky to be in London in time to be included. Some twenty or thirty of us, young and not so young, male and female, were driven to Epsom Downs in a chartered charabanc and spent the day in sybaritic feasting and jollity, watching the races from the roof of the vehicle and cheering and shouting with the thousands of other spectators similarly positioned on bus tops and similar vantage points. There was a veritable sea of vehicles crowded cheek by jowl in the vast parking paddock, and an amusement park was attached, with gambling games of 'skill' and chance of every sort. I wouldn't have imagined till then how light-hearted and jolly Meinertzhagen could be: he led in all the fun, rode on the merry-go-round horses, slapped his thighs in delight and seemed to enjoy himself thoroughly.

One thing about this Derby junket that is vividly fixed in my memory and with a sense of outrage, almost, is the brutally primitive toilet arrangements that were in operation. As can be imagined, on a cold windy day in the open there was a great

demand for this facility. There was a large unpartitioned *shamiana*-like marquee tent to which you got admission by paying 6d at the entrance. Within, you were faced with the unedifying sight of twenty or more men all lined up and unbuttoned, no semblance of privacy, and many more queued up behind, along a shallow runnel in the turf, all getting their money's worth of relief. Due to the briskness of business the runnel was overflowing its edges and by midday had already formed a snipe marsh of human urine through which all comers had to splash their way to the line of action. This would be a disgusting exhibition of barbarism even among the most backward civilizations, and I must admit that it gave me a rude shock to see this in the homeland of the Englishman, who, in India, is usually so snooty about the unhygienic habits of the 'natives'. No, we couldn't beat this in India.

Apart from the superb collection of bird and natural history and big-game hunting books in Meinertzhagen's library—many of them first editions and collectors' items—I was particularly impressed by the unbroken series of his meticulously kept diaries since 1890 or thereabouts, each annual volume uniformly typed in an italic fount and handsomely bound in leather. The diaries record in detail not only Meinertzhagen's personal experiences and adventures as a wide-awake colonial military officer in the British colonies in Africa, but also his lively impressions of his contemporaries, official as well as non-official. The political and social conditions of the period, and candid—often pungent and not always charitable or unbiased—views and opinions on men and matters are also on record here. The diaries, moreover, contain a vast store of scientific facts and data gathered during his long military service, and on numerous scientific and hunting expeditions in Africa and elsewhere, which are invaluable as coming firsthand from an exceptionally keen and observant individual with a distinctly original mind.

These diaries have formed the basis of Meinertzhagen's *A Kenya Diary*, and several other outstanding books. They have been exploited to good advantage by his biographers, for instance by John Lord in *Duty, Honor, Empire* (New York,

Random House, 1970). Meinertzhagen's adventures in Africa and the stories of his bravery and courage earned him widespread fame as well as notoriety. The awe in which he was held by people 'on the other side' is brought out in one of Gavin Maxwell's books. In his boyhood recollections of his uncle, Lord William Percy, himself a keen ornithologist, Maxwell says, 'He [Lord William] was a close friend of Colonel Dick Meinertzhagen whose exploits in Kenya were famous; he was a legendary figure to me, made even more ogre-like by Uncle Willie's reply to some particularly inane remark of mine, "Gavin—Dick Meinertzhagen's coming to stay next week. I wouldn't say things like that in front of him if I was you—he's killed men with his bare hands!"'

Meinertzhagen was a close friend and admirer of Dr Chaim Weizmann, the propagator of the idea of a homeland for the Jews. After World War I, when Meinertzhagen was military governor of Palestine for a time, the two were actively engaged in scheming for the implementation of the Balfour Declaration. After Israel became a reality Meinertzhagen visited the country frequently and was an ardent champion of the Jews who had immigrated from all over to settle in the Promised Land, and full of praises of their dedication, industry and 'patriotism'. By contrast he saw little good in the Muslim Arabs, for whom he had an undisguised contempt. The Israelites, it is true, had achieved wonders in the material development of the land during the short period of their occupancy, making the waterless desert bloom in agricultural self-sufficiency and hum with galloping industrialization. In response to one of his panegyrics I had expressed a keenness to visit the country but doubted if with a Muslim name I would be welcome. In a letter written on his return from a visit to Israel in May 1953, Meinertzhagen says:

I had a wonderful time watching migration of hawks, storks and seagulls on the Gulf of Aqaba, over the Dead Sea and up the Jordan Valley. You need have no doubt about visiting Israel: there is no class distinction, no religious persecution, no political persecution. It is the purest form of communism without any of the objectionable elements of dictatorship. The whole population is loyal to the Israeli Government whether they are

communist or right-wing conservative. I have never seen a country in five years achieve so much under such harmful conditions of encirclement by six Moslem Arab states. The whole atmosphere is one of enthusiasm, progress and patriotism, without a trace of aggressive nationalism or boast. In fact humility, such a rare human attribute, dominates everyone. I believe Israel is the only stable factor in the Middle East. Go there and see! . . . In what part of the world is the worst mess? Is there any part of the world where there is not a mess? Both Africa and Asia are awakening: they have passed the yawning stage and are now getting on their feet, but I wish they would not make such a noise about it.

After a week or so in England, during which I motorcycled out to a number of far-flung friends in the country in the fabulous springtime which is the glory of the English scene, I took a Swedish tourist ship to Gothenburg. After a night with friends of friends in the industrial city of Orebro, I arrived in Uppsala in the afternoon, just in time for the opening session of the Congress, to a mild sensation among the delegates and my friends at my wonderful timing, having ridden out all the way from India! I had fitted out the solo machine with two bulky canvas pannier bags which carried an all-purpose wardrobe—including a black *sherwani* for formal occasions—much of which I realized too late was just redundant ballast. The bags could be unstrapped and carried to the hotel room on the night halts, but while convenient as containers, their weight disturbed the balance and produced a disconcerting tail-wobble which became quite dangerous when travelling at speed on the slippery cobbled road surfaces found in many small European towns and country villages. Among several unscheduled tosses on this account I recall a particularly nasty one before entering war-shattered Münster in Germany. The skid spun the motorcycle completely round and landed me sprawling in the middle of the road, luckily with only minor physical damage, not serious enough to interfere with the resumption of the journey. Luckily also, there was little following road traffic at the time to make matters worse: one of those gigantic delivery trucks, each carrying a dozen or more automobiles from factory to distributor, which always shook my composure as they thundered past on the autobahns, could at that moment of truth well have wound up the enterprise abruptly!

I had been warned against French motorists and their mania for *vitesse* generally, and against French truck-drivers specifically. Of the first I had enough hair-raising confirmation on Paris roads, but luckily escaped disaster more than once. I had ample experience also of some other unlovable traits of the Frenchman—at least the Frenchman of the capital. It happened to me so many times before I decided to quit Paris that I cannot believe it was just individual lack of friendliness and courtesy, but perhaps a crude and deliberate display of the Frenchman's notorious linguistic chauvinism. Paris was new to me, and in spite of a close study of the city's road map before I started out each day, when one suddenly came upon a diversion for road repair, it was easy to get completely lost in that maze of streets and boulevards. Unfortunately I speak no French, and every time I pulled up by a pedestrian for help in the politest English I knew, he just looked at me, then turned his back and walked away without even pretending to be apologetic.

From the time of my first introduction to the fantastic breeding ground of the flamingo in the Great Rann of Kutch in 1944, this has been a bird of very special interest for me. At the Congress in Uppsala I had occasion to meet and exchange notes with several American and European ornithologists who were also flamingo fans and had read of my investigations at the Rann colony. I was naturally keen to visit the European breeding grounds in the Camargue (southern France) and in the delta of the Guadalquivir river in Spain to compare the ecological conditions. The doyen of French ornithology, Professor J. Berlioz of the Musée d'Histoire Naturelle, very kindly gave me letters of introduction to the flamingo warden in the Camargue.

Dr Luc Hoffman, a young Swiss ornithologist, fast oncoming then but internationally established now, who owned a biological research station later to earn international fame as Station Biologique du la Valat, extended hospitality and birding opportunities in the area. He expected me for lunch on a certain day and I had timed myself to arrive at his residence, about a hundred kilometres from my night's halt, around one o'clock. I hadn't reckoned with French truck-drivers, so actually landed up at my destination at 4.30 with a deep gash on

my forehead, a smashed headlight and sundry minor dents on the machine, fortunately not serious enough to hold me up. While I was cautiously negotiating a blind curve, a fully laden truck whipped round the corner with French *vitesse* and gave me a very unpleasant near head-on. After sending me sprawling, the driver shouted something in his mother tongue (uncomplimentary, no doubt) and drove on as if it was all in the day's work. A good samaritan in a following car picked me up, clothes covered with blood, and rushed me down to a small hospital run by nuns from a convent a few miles from the city of Arles. Not one of these good women spoke English and it was a trying pantomime (quite amusing in retrospect) trying to explain the circumstances and situation to them and to establish my credentials, and to convey in dumb charade that I *had* had an anti-tetanus injection before, about which they seemed particularly concerned. The kind sisters soon stitched and bandaged me up, and washed the blood off my clothes, but were loth to discharge me in that condition, insisting that I remain as an in-patient for the night. It was a wordless tussle with much gesticulation that finally got me my release, with further pantomiming of gratefulness. I didn't have my host's telephone number and it seemed impossible to explain to the kind nuns what I wanted. But they got me a taxi to the Sunbeam, still on its side, which, with some assisted tinkering, straightening in the right places and hammering into shape, started off without fuss and gave no trouble on the way. My lunch host, worried at my 'no show', was deliberating on further action when I rode in with bandaged head to tell the tale.

Unfortunately, July is not the flamingo breeding season in the Camargue, but it was interesting to visit the site and examine the disused nests which were far more easily approachable than Flamingo City in the Rann of Kutch. In good seasons something like 7,000 pairs are estimated to nest in the Camargue. In 1945 the only tolerably reliable estimate that has so far been made of the Kutch colony on the basis of occupied nests showed approximately half a million birds in the Kutch population, including both sexes as well as downy and partly fledged young. That count did not include unhatched eggs still

under incubation. Thus it is quite believable that the Kutch colony of the Greater Flamingo (*Phoenicopterus ruber*) is the most populous in Asia, and may be almost the largest anywhere. For me the 1945 expedition to Flamingo City in Kutch is particularly memorable because it was the only one in several visits before, and many since, that I have been lucky enough to find the colony at the high peak of the breeding activities.

The two post-Congress field excursions from Uppsala I had chosen were to Abisko in Swedish Lapland and Riksgransen near the Sweden-Norway border. It was all a fantastic fairyland of superb scenery, of snow-patched mountains, rushing torrents and partially frozen lakes and tarns. Around mid-June the breeding of birds was at its height, and for me it was particularly interesting to meet some of our wintertime Indian friends—Curlew, Whimbrel, Rednecked Phalarope, Broad-billed Sandpiper, the two Godwits and the two Stints—in their summer finery and on their Arctic nesting grounds.

At Abisko we were billeted in tourists' log cabins, one of which I shared with Peter Scott of the Wildfowl Trust, and Finnur Gudmundson, an Icelander and a giant of a man, perhaps the largest and most massive human in my experience. One of my pet aversions, and my idea of uttermost misery, is having to share a cabin or a tiny high-altitude tent with a robustly snoring companion. I had not met Gudmundson before and had no notion of his vital statistics or his potential as a snorer. Therefore when I first set eyes on him filling our little cabin with his gargantuan bulk my heart sank and I braced myself for a thoroughly miserable night. Happily the fear was belied: unbelievable for one of his size Finnur proved a considerate non-snorer. I found him to be a gentle and friendly soul and an excellent ornithologist, from whom I learnt a great deal about his fascinating homeland and its bird life.

I find that I have missed out much of the latter-day story of the BNHS, with which I have been so closely associated, particularly since my repatriation from Burma in 1924, and more particularly since India's Independence. It has been a period of great intellectual gratification for me personally, and also, I like to feel, of considerable significance in the progress of the Society and the proper projection of its image within the

country and abroad. One of our greatest difficulties soon after Independence, during my secretaryship and as stop-gap Curator, was to find a suitable incumbent in place of Prater, and an Assistant Curator to replace Charles McCann—who should normally have stepped into the breach. Both of them had set a standard of excellence that was difficult to match. Thus, it was after a prolonged period of trial and error with several probationers that potentially suitable though inexperienced replacements became available.

This reminds me of a miraculous coincidence that must surely stand as unique. I have recounted the story many times before to all and sundry but it will do no harm to repeat it here. One of the candidates selected was a young zoology M.Sc. from Kerala who, surprisingly, seemed interested in and even eager to undertake field work, which normally involves a fair amount of sustained physical exertion and is thus usually shunned by most who can afford to. In trying to learn something more about this unconventional youth's background I casually asked if he had ever heard of a person called Jeevanayakam in Kerala. This Jeevanayakam had been the member-secretary of a roving committee of educationists (the Statham Committee) appointed by the Travancore government in the 1930s to inquire into the alleged malpractices of state-aided private schools. While touring the state for the bird survey in 1932, I was constantly bumping into this committee in the various dak bungalows or camp sheds we had to share. Jeevanayakam had always shown great cordiality and friendliness to me and a keen interest in our bird work, but after that we had lost touch. Now here was a young man from Kerala: what more likely than his knowing about Jeevanayakam's whereabouts? Jokingly I inquired of Daniel if he had ever heard of such a person in his native Travancore who I had known a mere twenty years before. By a one-in-ten million chance and with almost total unbelief I learnt that this Jeevanayakam was indeed none other than Daniel's own father! True to south-Indian custom and tradition, the initial J in J.C. Daniel stood for Jeevanayakam. And how naive of me not to have guessed it!

Harking back to my own sorry experience of 1929, when I had wanted to specialize in ornithology for my future career

and found no institution or university in India equipped to impart the proper instruction, I was able to persuade the University of Bombay after we had acquired the necessary experience and expertise to supply this deficiency, to recognize the BNHS as the guiding institution for post-graduate research in Field Ornithology, leading to Master's and Doctoral degrees in Zoology. For my first M.Sc. student, Vijaykumar Ambedkar of Poona, I prevailed upon the University as a special case to appoint Dr David Lack F.R.S.* as a foreign external examiner for his thesis on 'The Ecology and Breeding Biology of the Baya Weaver *Ploceus philippinus* (Linn.)'. This was really more for my own satisfaction that my guidance was on the right lines. Dr Lack's assessment of Ambedkar's thesis was reassuring. After making some minor criticisms he said:

Assuming that the standard for the M.Sc. of the University of Bombay is about the same as for English universities, I am of the opinion that the present thesis is worthy of the award, and well up to the standard required . . . I found the thesis very interesting, very clearly written and presented, with a very good coverage of the literature of the subject, and with a sufficient amount of original research to justify the award fully in my view.

With a nucleus donation from myself, I initiated a fund under the BNHS named the Sálím Ali-Loke Ornithological Research Fund (SALOR). Its corpus of about Rs 300,000 was built up by donations from members and well-wishers of the Society, but chiefly by benefactions from the Loke family of Singapore, in memory of my close friend and fellow-ornithologist, Loke Wan Tho, killed in an air crash in Taiwan in 1964. The interest on this corpus supports two postgraduate Fellows at a time for two to three years each. Latterly, a munificent grant from the Sir Dorabji Tata Trust has enabled the Society to endow an additional Fellow for the period of his study. All this has been a source of great satisfaction to me, since the Society is now capable of producing adequately trained field biologists of a calibre otherwise difficult to find in India.

* Director, Edward Grey Institute of Field Ornithology, Oxford.

Hamid Ali

A book entitled *Apprentice to Power* by Sir Malcolm Darling, a distinguished Indian civil servant, published in 1966, fortuitously came into my hands a few years ago. It describes the author's first three and a half years in India some sixty years earlier as a newly joined member of the Indian Civil Service, and is based mainly upon the letters he wrote home to his mother and friends in England as well as excerpts from his diary. In the preface he confesses: 'as to myself and India, I arrived there knowing something of its history but nothing about its peoples.' The very first paragraph of the opening chapter of the book describing his arrival in India gave me a least expected thrill of pride. It read:

On Sunday, November 27, 1904, the *City of Vienna* dropped anchor in Bombay. I was sleeping on deck, and when I woke the sun was rising in a glow of crimson behind the distant hills across a fine open roadstead. It was already hot, and the air was heavy with an exotic fragrance, first met at Port Said. Port Said had given me 'a scare of the East—the natives look so revolting'. Happily there was an Indian on board who gave me a very different impression. Hamid Abdul Ali, a native of Bombay and like myself new to the Indian Civil Service, was widely read in French, German and English, with opinions of his own on all he read and a strong sense of humour. For me he was 'the' most interesting person on board; yet because of the accident which had made him dark instead of fair he stands even more aloof from the ship's company than I do.' It was my first hint of the wide social gulf in the India of those days between East and West.

Hamid was my favourite brother, as he perhaps was of all

my brothers and sisters. I like to presume that I was closest to him—an inferior imitation—in temperament, interests, outlook and likes and dislikes. It is certainly to his influence and direct encouragement more than anyone else's in the family circle that I owe my early initiation and development as a naturalist. Ever since he gave me one of Rowland Ward's egg collecting kits as a present on my eleventh or twelfth birthday, he followed my progress in bird study with sympathy and encouragement, and his helpful comments and advice always acted as a spur to greater efforts on my part. I felt genuinely elated when, after seeing my report of the Travancore Ornithological Survey he wrote (Satara, 20.6.35), 'I have only lately gone through your article on the Travancore Survey in the last number of the *BNHS Journal* [Vol. 37 (4)] and think it right to send off a few lines to congratulate you on the way in which you have tackled the subject. This is, to my mind, the maturest and soberest in expression and the most thorough in content and matter. I felt so happy reading it, I thought I *must* sit down and write to you.' The winter schoolboy vacations I spent with Hamidbhai in camp during his duty tours in Sind were an education by themselves. They were memorable opportunities, not only for fostering my love of natural history and birds but also because they gave me an insight into the secret of the universal popularity and genuine love and respect he inspired among the country folk in his care. Indeed so genuine and deep-rooted was this esteem and affection that when after twenty years or more I had occasion, in the course of my bird work, to visit some of the districts where he had served, I had only to give the 'password' that I was a brother of Hamid Ali to be gushingly welcomed with open arms by the grey beards who had known him personally, and be given lavish hospitality and assistance.

Hamid was a remarkable linguist. Besides scholarly proficiency in English, German and French among the European languages, he was fluent in reading and writing Urdu, Hindi, Sindhi, Gujarati, Marathi, Pushtu, Arabic and Persian, and could also speak most of these languages with fluency.

The case of my maternal uncle, Abbas Tyabji, Hamid's father-in-law, was peculiar but by no means unique in the

political turmoil of the times. On his return from England as a barrister, in 1893 or thereabouts, he had joined the judicial service of the Gaekwar of Baroda, and after serving as District Judge for a number of years he rose to the bench and served as a judge of the Baroda High Court until his retirement in 1913. Being my mother's elder and only brother he was thrust into the guardianship of my brothers and sisters on my mother becoming widowed in 1897 or so. However, he was only the titular guardian, and the brunt of real guardianship of the family, soon to be orphaned, fell on the willing and selfless shoulders of another more distant uncle, Amiruddin, and his childless wife Hamida Begam, whom I have mentioned before. It is sad to relate that since my return from Germany in 1930 and continuing joblessness, to the end of his days (he died in 1935 or '36) Abbas remained the most caustic critic among my elders of my ornithological activities, which he thoroughly disapproved. He considered I was merely a shirker and a waster, and that ornithology was just a cover for my indolence and reluctance to do 'honest and gainful' work. It is a pity he did not live to see that the indolence has paid dividends!

However, all this is a different story. Right from the time of his education in England and up to his retirement as a High Court Judge, uncle Abbas was a true-blue loyalist among the loyalists. Though a moderate nationalist at heart, he would stand no adverse criticism of the British as a people, or of the Raj, and even a mildly disparaging remark about the King-Emperor or the royal family was anathema to him; so much so that if he was ever caught in a discussion where such disloyal or 'seditious' sentiments were being aired, he would get up and walk straight out of the gathering. If he had any strong sentiment about Swadeshi he certainly didn't show it by precept or example. His clothes were mostly made of foreign material and everything about his household and style of living was patrician, truly western and very 'proper'. This being so, he naturally disagreed vehemently with Gandhiji and his methods of political mass agitation—the cult of civil disobedience, of non-cooperation with the British Government in India (non-violent though it be) and militant Swadeshimism involving the burning of

foreign cloth. In other respects his moderate but simmering nationalism and his absolute integrity and fairness as a judge were widely recognized and lauded, even by leftist Congressmen and anti-British extremists.

Thus it was that after the Jallianwalabagh massacre in 1919, when the Congress set up an independent fact-finding committee, Abbas Tyabji's name as chairman/convenor gained solid support. After listening to and cross-examining hundreds of eyewitnesses and victims of General Dyer's brutality with nausea and revulsion, mixed at first with some degree of disbelief at the applause the General's action had won from Raj diehards and English conservatives, Abbas was a changed and thoroughly disillusioned man. He made a complete political somersault overnight, as it were, and soon became one of Gandhiji's most devoted co-workers. He discarded his western aristocratic life-style and took ardently to simple homespun *khadi*. He travelled round the country in unused-to third class railway carriages, halting in unlovely bug-ridden *dharamsalas* and ashrams, sleeping on hard ground and foot-slogging miles in the hot summer sun preaching the gospel of non-violent non-co-operation with the 'satanic' colonial British Indian Government. All this hectic activity and hardship he undertook when well past seventy, including several years aggregately in jail as a political prisoner.

Hamid was Assistant Collector and District Magistrate of Panchmahals district, Gujarat, in 1917. I had occasion, during the 'study break' from Burma to spend a few days with him in camp during his working tour in winter. At that time he had to try a case in which a village *patel* had been charged by the government for 'disloyalty' or 'sedition' or some such political offence which had become a fast-spreading 'infection' in Gujarat since Gandhiji's return from South Africa a couple of years earlier. Gandhiji had come over to give evidence in defence of the *patel* who, after a prolonged hearing, was finally discharged. We were living under canvas a short distance away from the court tent, in a magnificent old mango grove, and I vividly remember Hamidbhai escorting Gandhiji into the dining tent after the trial for a cup of 'tea', which was in fact goat's milk and

some roasted groundnuts (or *chewda*?) kept ready for him. Though he had not yet acquired his full Indian aura, I was thrilled to meet the man who had earned such worldwide acclaim for his anti-racial and humanitarian work in South Africa. What impressed me most were his transparent and unassuming simplicity and his quiet sense of humour. Being allergic to pomposity in any shape or form, and a firm believer in the saving grace of humour, I have the highest admiration for one who is not obsessed with his own importance and can sometimes laugh at himself, as Gandhiji obviously could. Indeed, I consider myself fortunate to have had this accidental chance of a family tête-à-tête with Gandhiji, since all my later meetings with him have been impersonal and more or less in the nature of public *darshans*.

Hamidbhai was District Magistrate in the several districts of the then Bombay Presidency, where he was posted from time to time during this period of political turmoil, between about 1915 when Gandhiji returned from South Africa upto the time of his retirement from service with a sigh of relief in 1935, when the National Movement had become uncomfortably hot for him. His position all through this epoch was particularly awkward and unenviable: by conviction he was a wholehearted nationalist, yet as a senior civilian and administrative head of his district he was bound to uphold the letter of the law impartially and deal with political agitators in the manner prescribed. His nationalist leanings and his popularity with political leaders as well as the general public had made him covertly suspect with the rulers, and a marked man from almost his apprenticeship to power. That he did not rise to anything higher than a Collector and District Magistrate during his service, in spite of his tact and quiet efficiency, was quite obviously due to his insufficiently disguised nationalistic outlook and tendencies, and to his popularity with all levels of the Indian public, whether pro-government or anti.

His wife, Sharifa, the daughter of Abbas, was more volubly nationalistic, sometimes rather indiscreetly so, which added to the awkwardness of Hamidbhai's position. She was a strong-willed, dedicated social worker, particularly interested in the

education of girls and the social uplift of village women. She was a staunch champion of the Swadeshi Movement, which at the time carried strong political overtones, and she made no secret about it. With a roving father-in-law preaching the naughty cult of civil disobedience and non-co-operation at his doorstep, and such an outspoken wife within, the awkwardness for Hamidbhai was mounting to embarrassment. He pleaded with Abbas to keep away from his district, since, if he came and made an anti-Raj speech within his jurisdiction, it would leave him no option but to arrest him. Uncle Abbas, to his credit it must be said, fully appreciated Hamidbhai's predicament and considerately kept away.

In his last-minute briefing to police parties going off to keep or restore law and order in villages threatened with civil disobedience, Hamidbhai always stressed the need for cool-headedness and the use of minimum force even under provocation or threat of physical violence. In one of his districts where the Superintendent of Police was an empire-building young Britisher, a serious forest satyagraha by *adivasis* was threatened and even bloodshed feared. Hamidbhai was naturally greatly perturbed. On his way to the scene of disturbance the DSP with a posse of armed policemen stopped by for the final briefing from the District Magistrate. I heard Hamidbhai plead with him to use as little force as possible, and then only if absolutely unavoidable. And his parting words were 'No firing on any account!' In the event actual force *was* avoided, though at one stage the situation had got decidedly ugly. And the District Magistrate heaved a sigh of relief.

On retirement from service in 1934 or thereabouts, Hamid and his wife Sharifa had settled down at Mussoorie in the charming old bungalow 'Southwood' which he later gifted to the Central Government for the use of officials as a holiday home. Some of his more intimate cronies love to recall a puckish prank Hamid once played on them when well past seventy-five, and after over half a century of happy married life with Sharifa. They were shocked beyond belief one morning, to receive from him without any previous inkling whatever a bombshell curtly announcing that he was getting married and

inviting them to be present to witness the ceremony. The Hamid Alis were popular socialites and 'do-gooders' in the hill-station, with a large circle of intellectual friends and admirers. They were well known as a devoted and exemplary couple, and his friends could not believe that he was about to acquire a new wife—and at that time of life! They thought the poor old man had gone off his head, and felt genuinely relieved on learning the explanation later. It seems that according to Shariat law a Muslim may in his lifetime gift away his property in part or in whole to whomsoever he pleases. But once he is dead it is obligatory for his property to go to his legal heirs, however distant or indirect, irrespective of any will he may have made. Being a Muslim, and being childless, the only way in which he could assure his property going where he wished was by getting his marriage registered under the Civil Marriages Act and then executing a will accordingly. So this is what it turned out to be all about!

In Bombay one afternoon, around three o'clock (November 1980), as I was working at my desk comfortably undressed, in sleeveless vest and short sleeping *izar*—therefore least prepared for visitors—in barged a complete stranger, having somehow escaped the vigilance of our normally watchful dogs, straight into my study. He was a thick-set man of around sixty-five, dressed respectably in western style, complete with a necktie. I was naturally annoyed at this unannounced intrusion at such an odd hour and asked him rather brusquely who he was, what he wanted, and why he had chosen this unusual time to call. He apologized and explained that he was a visitor from Gujarat specially come to Bombay on a mission of great personal importance for himself. He had found out my address somehow and had been trying to locate 46 Pali Hill for a considerable time. He said he wanted nothing from me but, on the contrary, had come looking for me simply in order to repay a long-standing debt. He then introduced himself as one Kshirsagar who had recently retired from the registrarship of one of the universities in Gujarat. He explained that his father had been a school master and a dedicated social worker in Satara years ago, in which dual capacity he had come in intimate contact

with and developed a deep regard and friendship for my brother Hamid Ali ICS, who happened then to be the Collector of Satara. The father had died some time ago and on the tenth (or fortieth?) day after his death they had performed the customary ceremony of feeding cooked rice to crows for the salvation of the departed soul. It seems that when the rice was put out a number of crows gathered, but they all just sat around in a circle and none would approach the proffered bounty. Seeing this, one canny elder suggested that there was probably some wish of the deceased that his son had failed to honour, or some monetary debt of his still standing undischarged. The son could not recollect any omission of this sort offhand, but he ultimately recalled that at one time, years after my brother had retired from service and settled in Mussoorie, Kshirsagar's father had sent Hamidbhai an urgent SOS for financial help in a critical situation connected with Kshirsagar's impending departure to the USA for education. Within minutes of his taking a vow before the gathering to the effect that he would spare no pains to repay the debt, one of the crows, recounted Mr Kshirsagar, sidled up to the rice and began pecking at it, presently to be joined by his waiting companions. This promptly removed any lurking scepticism his foreign education may have injected in Kshirsagar about the mediation of crows in the saving of human souls; it converted him to a firm belief in the 'superstition' for evermore. All honour to him, however, for repaying a long forgotten debt—unreminded and unasked—after fifty years, even if perhaps for a vicariously ulterior motive. Would that more men like him were born, and oftener!

The fulfilment of that vow was the mission that had now brought Mr K to Bombay. I was one of the executors of my brother's will, but could trace no mention of any such loan among his papers. I therefore refused to accept the payment, but since Kshirsagar seemed so desperately anxious to fulfil his vow I passed him on to S.F.B. Tyabji & Co., the advocates who were handling the estates of the late Mr and Mrs Hamid Ali. The lawyers also could not find any record of the transaction among the estate papers and were likewise refusing to

accept payment till, in desperation, Kshirsagar pulled out a crumpled old postcard from his pocket written in Hamidbhai's own hand from 'Southwood', Mussoorie, dated some time in 1934 (or '35), acknowledging the elder Kshirsagar's request, advising an immediate remittance to him by bank draft, and expressing his friendly hope and concern for the money reaching him in time for his son to proceed on his voyage. The amount involved, we discovered, was Rs 1,000, therefore no small sum in those days—when rice and wheat were sold at 8–10 seers per rupee and you could buy a brand new Ford car for under Rs 4,000. But such was the measure of Hamidbhai's unostentatious generosity and humanism that throughout his service—having no children of his own to worry about—he regularly gave away a considerable portion of his monthly salary to needy, aged relatives and dependants, or for the education of miscellaneous poor boys and girls, and other deserving causes, all completely off the record. We only learnt of some of these benefactions occasionally and accidentally from the recipients themselves, or from indirect sources.

Talking of superstitions, I must admit that my own congenital unbelief in all forms of spiritualism, occultism, astrology and ultra sensory 'magic' of that sort had been somewhat rudely shaken, albeit temporarily, after what happened to my brother Aamir in Burma in 1919, less than two months after he joined us in business in Tavoy. A few miles out of the town there was a fairly large masonry tank in the beautifully wooded campus of a Buddhist monastery containing a dense concentration of carps, many of which were believed to be hundreds of years old and all of them regarded as highly sacred. They were pampered on scraps by devout pilgrims and picnickers alike and had grown enormously fat and 'desirable'. But they were safe from poachers and vandals because of a traditionally rooted superstition that any person trying to catch or harm the fish was sure to come to grief. Aamir, like myself, was a complete unbeliever in superstition and occultism. Out of sheer devilry and as if to defy the fates he lightheartedly picked up a stone and flung it purposefully at the seething mass when no one was about. We had gone picnicking to this beautiful spot early that morning,

Tehmina in the sidecar and Aamir on the pillion of the Harley-Davidson combination. He was perfectly hale and hearty and full of beans when we left, but complained of a slight stiffness in the joints after we returned around lunch time. We didn't pay much heed to this since from a longish pillion ride over rutted *kutchas* roads this was nothing unexpected. But towards evening Aamir felt slightly feverish, with pain in the joints which got increasingly worse, with rising temperature in the next two days. It was then diagnosed as a severe bout of rheumatic fever, and in spite of all such medical aid as was available in that one-horse little township, poor Aamir was dead on the ninth day.* Call it coincidence if you like, but it did give a severe jolt to my rationalism.

* 22 April 1919.

Five Other Men

SIDNEY DILLON RIPLEY

One day in 1944 while I was working on the BNHS bird collection, temporarily housed in the Prince of Wales Museum, in dropped a young American, one of the many US Army personnel constantly in transit through Bombay in those war years. He introduced himself as Sidney Dillon Ripley, a post-graduate biology student of Yale University, some of whose ornithological publications I had been impressed with. I was happy to meet him personally, and we both took to each other at once. He had been drafted into the American forces in South-East Asia and was posted as an intelligence officer in Ceylon, a job that required frequent visits to the Joint Command HQ in New Delhi. This was my first meeting with one who was destined to become a lifelong friend and valued colleague, fellow-ornithologist and explorer, and co-author of several scientific papers and books. On this occasion and on his subsequent breaks of journey between Ceylon and Delhi, we discussed the possibilities of joint ornithological fieldwork and specimen collecting in India, and built air-castles about the expeditions we would make together once the War was over, when conditions returned to normal and free movement within the country, specially along our north-east border, became possible. Our first priority was to be the Mishmi Hills in extreme north-east Assam, the ornithology of which had never been properly studied. In the event it took a considerable time after hostilities ceased for conditions to become sufficiently

normal for this type of activity: it was not till the end of 1946 that a beginning could be made. Shortage of petrol and vehicles, due to strict wartime import restrictions and as an aftermath of the war, had made road transport, especially in off-beat places, a serious problem. In the case of the Mishmis the problem was less serious since most of the transport in the hills had to be done by pack mules and porters. Although the Mishmi expedition was a joint exercise, the sources of its funding were different. The financing of my part was—as on so many previous occasions—done entirely through the benefaction of Loke Wan Tho, while the BNHS helped with the services of a field collector/skinner, and, later, with the necessary museum facilities.

It was the first time that Italian and Japanese nylon 'mist' nets were tried out in India to catch birds, and their effectiveness, especially of the simplified Japanese type, convinced us that in thick shrubbery and undergrowth, as in the Mishmis and the eastern Himalaya generally, where skulking and secretive birds rarely showed themselves, this is the only way of detecting their presence and securing specimens. It was on this, our first joint expedition to the Mishmis, that the idea was initially mooted between us of doing a revision and updating of Stuart Baker's bird volumes in the Fauna of British India series (published some twenty years earlier), which we and other critical ornithologists had found unsatisfactory in many ways. We also felt that the new edition should be a thoroughly updated publication, not only for the use of professional museum ornithologists but also for the amateur bird watcher, and therefore well-illustrated and with popularly written life histories of the birds—more or less on the model of Witherby's *Handbook of British Birds*. We would split the authorship between taxonomy and ecology, the former being chiefly Ripley's responsibility and the latter chiefly mine. Source material for the general section would come largely from my own field records kept over the last fifty years, plus Whistler's meticulous bird notes from his several years of service in north-west India, and from Ripley's several Indian collecting expeditions. These would be supplemented by critically sifted

extractions from all the major publications on Indian birds in the last 150 years. The taxonomic base of the proposed *Handbook of the Birds of India and Pakistan* would be an authentic, comprehensive and up-to-date checklist to be prepared by Ripley and published under the sponsorship of the Bombay Natural History Society. Our *Handbook* was intended also to be an authentic source of complete information about all that had so far been recorded on some of the species, and what aspects were not sufficiently known and needed further study.

The library research and extraction work, subsidized by the Government of India, the US Educational Foundation and the Indian National Science Academy, took about four years, of which I spent six months in the US, mostly at Yale University where Ripley was Associate Professor of Zoology at the time. It gave us a chance of discussing together and trying out alternative formats and write-ups to find the best way of synthesizing the taxonomy section, to be written by Ripley in the US, with the life history section in Bombay by myself. My living expenses in America came from a Seessel Zoological Fellowship of Yale University, obtained through Dillon Ripley's kind intercession, while the round air trip came out of a Smith-Mundt Travel Grant. Work on the manuscript started in earnest only in 1964, by which time Dillon Ripley had moved over to Washington as Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, and the first volume of the *Handbook* was published in 1968. Thereafter, the rest of the ten volumes followed each other at short intervals. The series was completed in 1974 and the last volume officially released by the Prime Minister, Mrs Indira Gandhi, on 16 November 1974—four days after my seventy-eighth birthday.

From his earliest contact with the BNHS Dillon Ripley has been its fervid supporter, and especially since he took over as Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution. The Society and the Institution have both benefited substantially from their association in numerous ways. Many of the rather elaborate birding expeditions to politically sensitive and unexplored areas in the eastern Himalaya, along our north-eastern frontier, which have yielded such valuable research material and significant

additions to scientific knowledge, could not have been undertaken without the collaboration of the BNHS. Dillon Ripley's enthusiastic personal participation in these expeditions, along with his friendly, highly versatile and deceptively fragile-looking wife, Mary, contributed immensely to the fun of camp life. I had first met newly-wedded Mary in 1950, all elegantly attired and spruced up in the civilized social atmosphere of the International Ornithological Congress at Uppsala, looking a lot more fragile than now (1984). Immediately thereafter the couple were due to launch out on a birding expedition into the wilds of the Naga Hills (or was it New Guinea?), and I remember how she struck me as a singular misfit for the rough-and-tumble conditions she would have to face. However, after sharing several strenuous expeditions with the Dillon Ripleys subsequently, I realized how sadly I was mistaken: Mary Ripley amid the elegance of her Washington drawing room is not the same as Mary Ripley in safari outfit in a dripping leech-infested jungle camp. The two 'avatars' are irreconcilable.

The Bombay Natural History Society decided to bring out a Festschrift issue of the *Journal* in commemoration of my seventy-fifth birthday on 12 November 1971, for which Dillon Ripley amiably accepted the editorship and offered to obtain suitable contributions from our international circle of mutual ornithological colleagues and friends. To a somewhat over-generous Introduction to the Festschrift (which was later—1978—published by Oxford University Press in book form as *A Bundle of Feathers*) Ripley added in lighter vein a 'poetasterical' panegyric of his own make which cannot be allowed to escape immortalization. Here it goes:

ODE TO SÁLIM ON HIS SEVENTY-SEVENTH BIRTHDAY

12 November 1973, in camp, Bhutan
From the Wakhan and the Rann
To Point Calimere and Kandy
In monsoon rain or sun,
In dak bungalow or dandy,
Wherever there are birds

You will hear the reverent words:
Oh Sálím's our hero, Sálím's the man
Whose knowledge is always on tap.
The terror of wrens, Finn's Baya's fan,
A truly remarkable chap.
So ho for the Wedgebilled Wren
And hey for the tragopan hen;
So ho for the tweet tweet tseep
And hey for the leopard's cheep.*
Let's squeak like Blewitt's Owl
And honk like water fowl
As through thicket, bog and heather
We hunt for Hume's stray feather.
Oh Sálím's our hero, Sálím's the man
Whose knowledge is always on tap.
The terror of wrens, Finn's Baya's fan,
A truly remarkable chap.
For our part we know all his knowledge will glow
For ages to come, his lamp will shine out.
His birthday we sing while pheasants all crow
And birds of all kinds join in tuneful shout.
Nor Hodgson nor Baker knows more about life
Nor Coltart nor Inglis have weathered the strife
About bird lore and bird song with steadier light
Than our hero whose birthday we welcome tonight.
Oh Sálím's our hero, Sálím's the man
Whose knowledge is always on tap.
The terror of wrens, Finn's Baya's fan,
A truly remarkable chap.

In the event, due to the vagaries of the printing trade, the Festschrift number of the *Journal*—Vol. 71(3), December 1974—saw the light only in March 1976. The Ode was actually presented to me on my seventy-seventh birthday at a celebration

*Laboured. This reference is to the man who described the call of Molesworth's race of Blyth's tragopan, from where it sat in the middle of a bamboo clump, as sounding like a leopard! One of our pet jokes.

dinner arranged hush hush by the Dillon Ripleys in camp at Phuntsholing, on the culmination of one of our joint birding expeditions in Bhutan.

JOHN BURDON SANDERSON HALDANE

One of the most remarkable men it has been my good fortune to be associated with, even for the few short years he lived and worked in India, was Professor J.B.S. Haldane—a veritable giant both physically and intellectually. It was a fortuitous coincidence also that my earlier work on the ecology of Indian birds had come to the notice of Professor Haldane before he migrated to India, and had caught his fancy and won special approbation. In many of his popular lectures and talks at scientific conferences and seminars he often went gratuitously out of his way to make flattering references to my work, holding it up as an example of what it was possible to achieve by industry and dedication with no more sophisticated a tool than a pair of binoculars. He was for ever critical of 'foreign-returned' Indian scientists (especially from the US) who kept harping on the lack of sophisticated apparatus here and trying to justify the mediocre quality of the out-turn of most research scientists and laboratories in India. Haldane lost no opportunity to emphasize that no advantage was being taken by Indian scientists of the matchless opportunities for biological field studies available at their doorstep—opportunities that were the envy of western biologists.

JBS's phenomenal memory and powers of absorption and concentration, and the depth and breadth of his knowledge—not only of all the formal scientific disciplines like physics, chemistry, biology, biometry, genetics, etc.—but of ethnology, anthropology, philosophy (particularly Hindu philosophy) and astronomy, was encyclopaedic. He could read the heavens like a book and identify the major constellations and their constituents by their Sanskrit names. The greatest wonder to my mind was how, in the midst of all his multifarious intellectual preoccupations, scientific research and writing, he yet managed to keep himself abreast so profoundly of the latest discoveries, theories and developments and ongoing research in all branches

of science and the humanities, and be able to synthesize, discuss and explain them in such meticulous detail. As one of his distinguished colleagues, Professor Sir Peter Medawar, head of the Zoology Department of London University, in his Preface to Haldane's biography *J.B.S.* by Ronald Clark (1968), writes: 'He could have made a success of any one of half a dozen careers—as mathematician, classical scholar, philosopher, scientist, journalist or imaginative writer. To unequal degrees he was in fact all of these things. On his life's showing he could not have been a politician, administrator (heavens no!), jurist or, I think, a critic of any kind. In the outcome he became one of the three or four most influential biologists of his generation.'

The bushy eyebrows, massive head and gruff exterior gave Haldane a deceptively forbidding look to strangers. He could not suffer fools and charlatans for certain, and usually kept them in no doubt about this. But with youngsters, of whose sincerity to learn he was assured, he could be extremely gentle and patient and considerate, and would sacrifice endless pains and time to help them along. While a professor at the Indian Statistical Institute, Calcutta, he picked up several bright and promising students in this way and groomed them into highly original scientists, encouraging them to undertake well-thought-out 'fool experiments' as he called them, even at the risk of failure, but some of which could occasionally lead to unforeseen clues and rewards.

When the visit to India of Queen Elizabeth II in 1961 was first mooted, Haldane was officially asked for suggestions as to what he thought she should see in India. He replied 'If Her Majesty were allowed to choose her own programme after consultation with Mr Sálím Ali, our greatest naturalist, she would perhaps visit Chilka Lake (Orissa), Kaziranga (Assam) and Sambhar Lake (Rajasthan), preferably not killing any animals. She would at once acquire popularity with a hundred million or so Indians who take animals seriously, as Jehangir acquired it.'

I was deeply touched by an impromptu letter he wrote to me in May 1961 on his return from Italy, where he had attended an International Congress on Human Genetics. It said: 'I have

received a monstrous prize of about Rs 160,000 from the Italian Accademia dei Lincei. Probably you deserve this prize more than I. It was difficult for you to become a biologist. It was difficult for me not to become one, with my father's example before me If you have a biological job where a few thousand rupees would help, I should be able to spare them.'

At the Congress held by the University of Malaya in Singapore in 1958 to celebrate the centenary of Darwin and Wallace and the bicentenary of the publication of the tenth edition of Linnaeus's *Systema Naturae*, at which Haldane had been invited to preside and at which he urged me to present a paper ('The Breeding Biology of some Indian Weaver Birds'), he struck sniggerers dumb by the brilliance of his Presidential Address—'On the Theory of Natural Selection Today'. The surreptitious sniggering among the European section of the audience, as yet very 'true blue', booted and suited and thoroughly 'proper', was due to his occupying the Presidential chair in the Indian dress he had adopted, consisting of a (somewhat crumpled) white cotton *kurta* and loose pyjama, and Pathani *chapolis* on his unstockinged feet. But the most stunning of his intellectual wizardries came later when he was chairing the section on Biometry. After introducing a speaker whose paper involved a great deal of statistics and mathematics, Haldane descended from the stage and sat down on a classroom bench in the first row to listen, his elbow resting on the desk and hand supporting the massive head. He sat still in this position, eyes closed, for ten minutes or more while the lecturer reeled out statistics upon statistics, so that many in the audience thought Haldane was fast asleep, because the paper was indeed a lullaby for most of us. The listeners nudged each other, pointing to him. Suddenly the lion sprang to life to suggest to the speaker that he had probably made a mistake since, if this figure was this and that figure was that, the result could not be what he had shown. The speaker got flustered and embarrassed, and hurriedly rechecking his figures apologetically admitted that Haldane was right. While the audience was enjoying the spectacle of a sleeping chairman, as they thought, Haldane was mentally working out the statistical details for himself. It was a

remarkable demonstration of his power of concentration and left his scoffers completely floored.

Official procrastination and delay in scientific matters was anathema to JBS. Upon learning of the inordinate delay on the part of the CSIR to respond to my application for modest funding to keep two bright young scientists in the field on an ornithological project, he wrote to me with characteristic generosity: 'Barrackpore, May 2, 1962. If you want Rs 3,000 or so to help a hopeful young man, why not apply to me? Even if I say "No" I shall do so quicker than CSIR.'

RICHARD WATKINS BURTON

Lieutenant Colonel R.W. Burton, was the sixth of nine brothers, all, interestingly, in the military profession. Four (or five?) of them were in the Indian Army, following in the footsteps of their father, General E.F. Burton, also a veteran tiger slayer. In his younger days, right from the time he joined the BNHS as a greenhorn subaltern in 1891, R.W. Burton was an ardent sportsman, developing with experience into an intrepid big-game hunter. He lived through many thrilling encounters with wounded or man-eating leopards and tigers, and survived serious mauling by a wounded bear. As has happened so often to veteran hunters, Burton switched over in later life to wildlife conservation with the same passionate zeal as earlier to shikar. With Independence in 1947, the loosening of firearms controls and laxity in the maintenance of law and order—when most of the conservation-conscious British forestry and administrative officials left the country—India's wildlife fell on evil days. Among the attenuated cadre of Indian officers of the forest administration, which from its inception had borne the statutory responsibility of caring for wildlife, there was only a handful of sufficiently interested or knowledgeable men to safeguard the wildlife left in their charge. In the context of revenue-earning forestry, which they considered their main commitment, wildlife received bottom priority, and its care was even looked upon by some as an imposition. Wildlife within the forests and outside was disappearing at an alarming rate and many species seemed on the verge of extinction.

It was at this point that Colonel Burton, who, on retirement from the army had chosen to settle in Bangalore and was now on the Society's Advisory Committee, stepped in to lend the full weight of his long experience and concern to the BNHS (of which the honorary secretaryship had willy-nilly devolved on me) in its efforts to keep the subject of wildlife preservation in focus with the government and public. Our principal strategy was to keep up a continuous flow of well-informed articles in the local newspapers, issue educative pamphlets, and direct appeals to the authorities and ministries concerned. Our object was to dispel apathy and create public and governmental concern for the wild animals that were being ruthlessly slaughtered all over the country. It is largely to the credit of the BNHS and of conservation-minded officials like M.D. Chaturvedi (the first Inspector General of Forests of Independent India) and S.L. Hora (Director, Zoological Survey of India), as well as to a thin sprinkling of individual naturalists and sportsmen, and importantly to a few stalwart British sportsmen 'staybacks' like Colonel Burton, R.C. Morris and E.P. Gee—along with the solid backing of Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru—that the Indian Board for Wildlife got constituted, paving the way for a better deal for wildlife.

The powerful boost given to the wildlife conservation movement by the masterly address of Mr Prater, the Society's Curator, at the Golden Jubilee celebration in 1933, on 'The Wild Animals of India and the Problem of their Conservation', had marked an awakening of interest in wildlife among the public and a sense of responsibility and concern for its preservation. It led to the high-level inter-provincial conference convened by the Government of India at Delhi in 1935, which made a number of practical recommendations for the better protection of wild animals both inside and outside forest areas. Some of the major recommendations took a long period of gestation, and it was not till after Independence, in 1953, that the Indian Board for Wildlife was born, charged with the responsibility of recommending to the Central Government policy matters and suitable strategies for the protection and preservation of our wildlife heritage. The very well conceived

and widely distributed pamphlet *Wildlife Preservation in India—India's Vanishing Asset*, stressing the urgent need for conservation through legislation and practical measures, was one of Colonel Burton's many seminal, timely and effective contributions to the cause he held so dear.

EDWARD PRITCHARD GEE

After retirement from a long innings of tea planting in Assam, E.P. Gee—a 'chronic' bachelor—settled down in Shillong where he assembled one of the finest private orchid collections in Assam, mostly taken in the wild by himself. As a young planter he had been an exceedingly keen sportsman-naturalist and an inveterate fisherman, which he remained to the end. By about 1948, when I first met Gee on the BNHS's survey of the rhinoceros population in Kaziranga Wildlife Sanctuary at the invitation of the Governor of Assam (Sir Akbar Hydari Jr.), he had given up shooting and taken to wildlife photography with a vengeance—a hobby in which he soon came to excel. He joined hands with Colonel Burton and R.C. Morris, who had also turned to conservation with missionary zeal. After meeting him at Bharatpur in 1957, Loke's diary describes Gee as

a fairly heavily built man, balding, and wears tortoise-shell covered spectacles. Like Browning's thrush he repeats everything twice over, the second phrase tumbling out after the first, 'peeneka pani hai, peeneka pani; He got fed up, he got fed up, so he shot himself, so he shot himself.' Gee is rather hard of hearing, and this may be the reason for the trick of repetition. Salim, too is pretty deaf, and when he and Gee talk to each other, the one in his high piercing voice and the other in his lower monotone, the world does not have to strain its ears to hear what they are saying!

During World War II Gee had volunteered for service and, since he was used to handling a large plantation labour force, he was assigned to the Pioneer Corps to supervise the building of one section of the famous Burma Road. As it happened, and unbeknown to either, there was another man of the same name supervising a different section of the road a few miles further on, and the superior officers were constantly getting confused between the two Gees. So, since our Gee was rather fond of talking, they aptly dubbed him 'Chatter-Gee'!

In 1961 I was prospecting for suitable ringing sites in the eastern Himalaya for the BNHS's Bird Migration Project. It had been reported by N.D. Jayal, when he was Assistant Political Officer at Tuting in the Siang Frontier Division a couple of years earlier, that this long crater-like valley was a very good place at the proper season for the study of migratory birds to and from Central Asia and beyond, and Gee cheerfully offered to accompany me on a reconnaissance. Before the PSS (perforated steel sheet)-covered airstrip was laid down during the war, the journey to Tuting from the political headquarters at Pasighat took fourteen days of foot-slogging up and down through thickly forested steeply mountainous country: now it took us just forty minutes by an austere stripped supply plane, as we perched upon sacks of rice and *dal* and *ata*, with drums of kerosene, petrol and oil as fellow-passengers, and a few live goats—mutton on hoof—for good measure. Flying with the doors of the elderly and somewhat tired Dakota wide open, with the wind gushing through, and looking straight down on an endless succession of peaks, ridges and awesome gorges thousands of feet below was a thrilling experience, even though the gigantic snow-covered mountains flanking the route through narrow valley corridors sometimes did seem much too close to the wing-tips for peace of mind! End of November was of course too late for seeing the autumn migration here, but, in any case, the remoteness and logistic hurdles would make ringing at Tuting an impractical proposition for the BNHS. Just a few weeks after our visit to Tuting the Chinese dragon overran the area in our first border war.

During the same reconnaissance we visited Jatinga to check its reported suitability for ringing migratory birds, though here again November was not the proper season. Jatinga is a tiny village in the North Cachar Hills which has, in recent years, acquired notoriety for the stories about the 'mass suicide' of birds—invented by imaginative newspaper reporters—which takes place here at certain times of the year. From local testimony we gathered that under certain weather conditions on moonless nights during the south-west monsoon, when the sky is cloud-overcast and there is a slight drizzle and heavy

ground mist, with the wind blowing south to north through the valley, i.e. against the flow of autumn migration, large numbers of birds of numerous families fly into bright lights, put up by the villagers to attract them, and are killed *en masse* for food by the ambushed hunters. The best time of the night is apparently between seven and nine and then again from two to four in the early morning. There seems nothing abnormal in migrating birds being attracted to bright lights on dark cloudy nights when the starry sky is invisible. This is a common experience at lighthouses along regular migration routes. But to me the real mystery of Jatinga is that among the birds on the move during such nights are many diurnal species like the Emerald Dove (*Chalcophaps*), Hill Partridge (*Arborophila*), Whitebreasted Kingfisher (*Halcyon smyrnensis*), and others which have always been considered resident and non-migratory, and which should ordinarily have no business flying at night. However, recoveries in India of such 'resident' species ringed in South-East Asian countries and the USSR suggest that there may well be a migratory element among the local populations behaving in the same way as the true long-distance migrants. Intensive ringing of resident birds in the area will throw more light on this problem.

Edward P. Gee (otherwise EPG) was one of the latter-day breed of cultured, well-educated planters. His dedication to wildlife conservation blossomed after he gave up the gun for the camera, and it became a veritable obsession with him after his retirement. He kept visiting the various national parks and major wildlife sanctuaries on his own to study and monitor in turn the local conditions at first hand, and he wrote extensively and authoritatively in the *Journal* of the BNHS, in *Oryx* (the reputed organ of the Fauna and Flora Preservation Society), and in various other scientific periodicals. He also wrote frequently in Indian dailies to publicize the cause and kept plugging the message of conservation through his own excellent wildlife films, lectures and radio talks, with missionary zeal. As a discerning freelance naturalist and a dynamic member of the Indian Board for Wildlife, Gee's opinions and suggestions were greatly appreciated and respected in official circles. His

book *The Wildlife of India*, published by Collins in 1964 with a very felicitous Foreword by Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, is one of the most popular and informative books on the larger wild animals of India and their status—interestingly and chattily written for the layman and illustrated with his choice photographs.

Gee was a very good and understanding friend to me and a most valuable asset to the BNHS, ever ready to help in its activities in any way he could when called upon, often at considerable inconvenience and expense to himself. Would that the Society had more committed members on the Gee model. It is tragic for Indian nature and wildlife conservation, and for Gee himself, that he died while still so active and full of enthusiasm, and just when his assiduous efforts and the movement for which he had worked so selflessly were beginning to show results.

HUMAYUN ABDULALI

One of my most promising *chelas* from his early schoolboy days in the twenties, after my final repatriation from Burma, was my cousin Humayun, a son of my brother-in-law Hassan's elder brother, Najmuddin Abdulali. Najmuddin, after a prosperous run of business in Japan, had decided to shift his headquarters to Bombay. He lived at Andheri, which was then a quiet, well-wooded suburb, the haunt of many of the commoner birds, some of which nested in his jungly compound. It was apparently here that Humayun's juvenile interest in natural history triggered off and he started collecting bird's eggs, snakes, lizards, frogs and other small creatures. In observing new bird arrivals and finding nests the youngster was assisted by a uniquely unusual servant woman, who, though completely illiterate and untaught, had a natural idiosyncrasy for birds and went about looking for them on her own.

By the time Humayun had done with school and taken up the formal zoology course at college (St Xavier's) he had already become an enthusiastic and knowledgeable all-round naturalist, specially interested in birds, of which he had made a very

creditable study collection for his college museum from the Bombay neighbourhood. This material, together with my own, collected chiefly between 1924 and 1929, formed the basis of our joint paper, 'The Birds of Bombay and Salsette', published in the *Journal* of the BNHS in 1936–7. In the early thirties Humayun spent three long college vacations with me on the Hyderabad and Travancore bird surveys. There he got his first practical introduction to methodical specimen collecting and fieldwork, which he has since developed to such good purpose. As an enthusiastic and perceptive young naturalist with keen observation and an original, inquiring mind, he proved a most useful field assistant: a pleasant, stimulating and amusing companion in camp and on shooting trips, being a tireless and discriminating collector of bird and other natural-history specimens. Humayun was an excellent shot with his 12-bore and usually kept the camp in meat. Moreover, he was somewhat of a dare-devil, ever ready to undertake risky missions in quest of birds, such as scaling up a towering scarp to an eagle's eyrie, or dangling at the end of an uncertain rope a hundred feet up within a cave-shaft to examine swiftlets' nests.

While Honorary Secretary of the Society (1950–62) and its representative on the Bombay State Wildlife Advisory Board, Humayun was actively involved, in collaboration with the Forest Department, in drafting the Bombay Wild Birds and Wild Animals Protection Act of 1951. It was the fruit of critical painstaking study and distillation and adaptation of similar legislation in a number of advanced western countries, and, with slight modifications, it later served as the model for the Central Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972—acclaimed as the most perfect piece of wildlife legislation we have so far had in India. It was mainly through Humayun's initiative and efforts as Honorary Secretary that the Society's negotiations with the Central Government for a separate building for the permanent housing of its offices, library and invaluable zoological collections were successfully completed—as witness whereof stands Hornbill House today. It is as unfortunate for himself as for the causes he holds dear that in later years Humayun has

not always been the easiest man to work with, to the detriment of his own image with many of his former associates, cronies and admirers. His undoubted competence could otherwise have contributed so much of constructive value.

Scientific Ornithology and Shikar

In my later days it has somehow been generally taken for granted that because I like birds I am bound to be revolted by the thought of anyone killing a bird, leave alone thinking of killing a bird myself. This assumption is far from correct, and it sometimes puts me in embarrassing situations. It is true that I despise purposeless killing, and regard it as an act of vandalism deserving the severest condemnation. But my love of birds is not of the sentimental variety. It is essentially aesthetic and scientific, and in some cases may even be pragmatic. For a scientific approach to bird study it is often necessary to sacrifice a few. I do not enjoy the killing, and sometimes even suffer a prick of conscience, but I have no doubt that but for the methodical collecting of specimens in my earlier years—several thousands, alas—it would have been impossible to advance our taxonomical knowledge of Indian birds—as the various regional surveys have done—nor indeed of their geographical distribution, ecology and bionomics. However, I believe a stage has now been reached when the *ad hoc* collecting of Indian bird specimens is no longer essential, except for special studies such as moult, or in the case of a few remote and unexplored pockets of the country, or of a few little-known species that are rare in museum collections. There is sufficient research material available in the BNHS, the Zoological Survey of India, and the great natural-history museums abroad, for solving most taxonomical problems. Thanks to international understanding and co-operation among scientists and scientific institutions, and to speedy air transport, the problem of borrowing

supplementary material for comparative studies has been simplified. Even from the time, until not so long ago, when birdwatching was rather looked down upon as an amateurish, time-killing pastime of the idle rich, and only morphology and taxonomy regarded as 'scientific' ornithology, my own principal interest has centred on the living bird in its natural environment.

I have bothered myself little with taxonomy except as an academic exercise. From the sidelines I have watched with dispassionate amusement, sometimes with distinct amazement, the wordy and often acrimonious battles among taxonomic giants as well as pedants and charlatans whose only acquaintance with the birds in question has been with musty museum specimens. The glib and self-assured manner in which some play the taxonomy game reminds me strongly of one of the immortal Omar Khayyam's quatrains—'Hither and thither moves and mates and slays, and one by one back in the closer lays'. And this is often what it really amounts to. After a full circle we are usually back in square one, where we started. The exercise fails to give me a thrill: so it has always been, and so will it always be, I fear. Happily, the overall emphasis has been shifting, particularly since World War II, from taxonomy to the field study of the living bird—Ecology and Behaviour. The scientific respectability and public recognition birdwatching has acquired within recent years was greatly boosted by the award of the Nobel Prize for Biology in 1973 to two (of the three joint) winners—Nikolaas Tinbergen and Konrad Lorenz—who had both started their careers as amateur bird-watchers.

Having grown up in an era when hunting for sport in the British tradition was regarded as almost a status symbol by the upper middle-class Indian—the thing for every young man of consequence to cultivate, or at least be able to talk about—I naturally became an ardent shooter under the inspiration and tutelage of our father-uncle, Amiruddin Tyabji. Amiruddin was a popular socialite among the élite and on intimate hail-fellow-well-met terms with sundry sporting rajas and nawabs of his day. His amiable nature and his prowess as a shikari were well known, and made him a frequent invitee to their hunting

forays. The stories of the regal tiger hunts and big-game adventures which he brought back fired my youthful ambition to become an inveterate big-game hunter. As a schoolboy I waited eagerly for the winter vacations—the shooting season—when I would often foist myself on some kindly upcountry relation, preferably a district officer doing his official winter tour and, incidentally, providing convenient shooting opportunities for himself and his guests. Most of my shooting as a vacationing schoolboy consisted of small game such as duck, snipe, partridge, quail and hare, which were abundant everywhere in the days before World War I, and decreasingly so even up to World War II. The bags were occasionally supplemented with an odd chinkara, blackbuck, hog deer, barking deer or pig, depending on the country. These shooting galas were usually shared with other Christmas house-guests and a number of schoolboy cousins more or less my own age, and there was a good deal of friendly rivalry amongst us youngsters in the number of rounds fired per bag obtained. As our quota of cartridges was carefully doled out to us, everyone naturally strove to excel.

During his service in Sind, then a province of Bombay Presidency, my second eldest brother, Hamid, was the most regular and uncomplaining victim of these schoolboy invasions. Perhaps the most productive period from the point of view of my shikar experience and natural history, and also for Hamidbhai himself and the several young cousins, was while he was posted as Superintendent of Land Records, and later as Manager of Encumbered Estates in Sind. His official duties were then light and left plenty of time for sport. Moreover, his winter tours then covered the entire province, and thanks to his thoughtfulness on behalf of his guests, the itinerary was contrived as far as possible to include the best shooting localities during the three or four weeks we were with him. Hamidbhai had taken to shooting fairly late in life, soon after joining the ICS in 1904 and being posted to Sind, where most of his British colleagues were ardent shikaris. Sind was reputed to be, and indeed was, a paradise for small game in those days, and it remained so at least up to the time of Partition. He soon

became an excellent shot with gun and rifle, and it was seldom that any of the younger members of the party could better his daily record. He discouraged us from aspiring for record bags, whether of duck or partridge or any other game; and being a keen naturalist and bird student himself, insisted on the bag being vetted each time and the species properly identified before being consigned to the kitchen. This early exercise has stood me in good stead. Though we never shot in excess, there was hardly a day when there was no game on the table, and often at all the major meals.

Those who have never ridden a well trained, repeat well trained, riding camel can have no idea of what a speedy and comfortable mode of travel it is in sandy semi-desert country. Hamidbhai had two specially good riding camels in his regular establishment, one for himself, the other for his wife Sharifa, on which most of their winter season touring was done. When there were camp guests, extra animals were hired for the duration from all-too-willing-to-please zamindars, many of whom prided themselves on being breeders and connoisseurs of pedigree camels. Hamidbhai usually went off by himself early in the morning before the rest of us were up and about, either on his beautiful bay gelding or on his favourite riding camel, to do his official inspections and other field chores, attended by a motley crowd of zamindars and local gentry and revenue officials mounted on ambling ponies of assorted sizes and quality, who often found it difficult to keep up with his camel. Its driver, the trusty and bearded Jan Mohammad, took puckish delight in showing off the paces and performance of his mount, and in the discomfiture of the retinue struggling to keep up.

Shifting camp every three or four days was a complicated exercise, but the fuss-free efficiency with which it was accomplished was, and still is, a standing marvel to me. The several large and cumbersome Swiss tents, furniture and baggage, including *durries*, *charpais*, folding chairs and tables—dining, dressing, office, wash, and others—thunderboxes, galvanized iron bath tubs, buckets and kitchen utensils, had all to be transported. Crockery, glassware, reading lamps, hurricane

lanterns and other fragiles were packed in specially designed wooden chests with concave backs which fitted snugly pannier-wise, one on each side, on 'freight' camels. The baggage train consisting of maybe fifteen or more pack camels tied nose to tail one behind the other jogged along all night, led by a camelman, and usually arrived at its destination in the early hours of the morning. So expert was the routine packing that in spite of the heavy and continuous jolting received, specially on the more frisky and recalcitrant animals, hardly ever did any lamp or crockery suffer damage. By the time the sahib and his guests arrived in the forenoon of the following day, everything was ship-shape—the various tents for the office, mess and guests were up and ready for occupation, the furniture and articles on the dressing tables and in the bath room, even an inadvertent safety pin, exactly in the same position as in the previous camp. The relay cook had been in action and lunch was ready on time, so that it was difficult to realize that you had shifted camp at all. The little army of *khalsis* or tent crew responsible for the operation were expert at their jobs, and the termite-like speed and orderliness with which the cumbersome tents and their furniture were handled at both ends was truly impressive. Of course for most of the basic equipment, such as tents and furniture, two sets needed to be maintained to allow one set to leapfrog to the next halt while the other was in use. Conditions have altered, alas, and in these days of hurry and bustle, of jeeps and motor trucks, of black-topped roads and furnished dak bungalows, of electric lighting and easy accessibility by telephone to departmental Secretaries and Ministers, combined with the inordinate increase in paper work at headquarters—the operation of Parkinson's Law—a district official's tour is no longer the leisurely idyll it used to be. As to shikar, in addition to the regrettable loss of its public respectability, the prohibitive cost of services and goods, of ammunition, and above all the tragic disappearance of game, large and small, from most of the country, has put an end to all legitimate sport. No vacationing schoolboy can ever more hope to enjoy the sort of outdoor opportunities that we had!

My first meeting with the Taloor or Houbara Bustard

(*Chlamydotis undulata macqueenii*) was during the first of such shooting vacations in Sind, in 1910 or thereabouts. I had read a good deal about protective coloration in animals and how it helps them to elude their enemies, but until I received a practical demonstration of this device from the houbara I could never have believed the perfection of its efficiency. The taloor is cherished by gourmets, and it certainly has its points as a table bird. But taloor shooting from camel back, as is usually done in Sind and as was laid on for us, is poor sport—a vicarious exercise at best. However, it involves consummate skill and judgement in the preliminary manoeuvring of the camel on the part of its shikari-camel driver. The eyesight of these desert dwellers is truly phenomenal. To pick out with the naked eye a houbara in its native sandy environment at a distance of maybe 500 yards is a feat that few can perform, even with binoculars, without considerable previous experience. After the shikari sights a bird the strategy is to circumvent it by a wide detour in a series of narrowing circles without arousing its suspicion until you are within gunshot range of the quarry. At one point in this manoeuvre you suddenly realize that the bird you have been watching slowly walking away while surreptitiously following your movements, has magically vanished. In the twinkling of an eye it has squatted flat at the foot of a diminutive bush, neck stretched out on the ground. The shikari pulls up the camel and nudges you excitedly to shoot, but for you the bird is simply not there. In desperation he points to that dried cow pat at the base of yonder bush and urges you to fire at that, which you reluctantly do, more in order to allay his disgust. It is only when the pat turns over with the shot that you notice the outspread wings and recognize it as your quarry! This is how I got my first houbara and also my earliest object lesson in the value of protective coloration for survival in animals. Elsewhere—as in Kutch—houbara shooting is usually done from the ground by having the birds driven over the guns. This method is somewhat more 'sporting', and on a cold and windy day when the birds really move, the shooting can be quite difficult and exciting.

But the houbara is pre-eminently and *par excellence* a quarry

for the falconer. Small wonder that the indiscriminate activities of sheikhs of the Gulf Emirates, who are chronic falconry addicts, are threatening to wipe the houbara out of existence in many of its pristine habitats. In the winter of 1967–8, for instance, one enterprising sheikh alone accounted for 915 birds in Pakistan in about four weeks' hunting. And this vandalism continues to increase year by year.

The Books I Wrote

Field notes on birds, about their occurrences and abundance, their habits, behaviour, associations, and other facets of their ecology and life history recorded over a long period of years, as in my own case, tend to become so much useless—more correctly, unusable—junk unless they have been maintained in a methodical way, properly indexed, and kept scrupulously up to date. For the greater part of my bird watching life, before the cassette type of mini tape-recorder and suchlike sophistications were born and became fashionable, the taking of detailed notes while actually working in the field was a comparatively slow and tiresome affair. A method that I had satisfactorily evolved for myself was to carry in my shirt pocket a small notebook and pencil and keep hastily jotting down on the spot. Besides making a list of the birds seen, I kept a running commentary of any interesting characteristic or unusual observation about them—of their general behaviour, calls and songs, food, nesting, social and interspecific activities or whatever, in a sort of hieroglyphic shorthand of my own. Back in camp and as soon as possible—before the nuances were forgotten—these syncopated notes were ‘decoded’, suitably amplified, and transcribed into a special loose-leaf ledger, each species under its own ‘account head’ in the style of commercial book-keeping. Each entry, even when no more than an individual sighting, was posted up with its date, locality, altitude, etc., so that in course of time upon opening the ledger at the required page I found spread before me everything I had ever observed anywhere about that particular species. Thus, when

assembling material for a report or book the job was vastly simplified and expedited.

In September 1935 I was formally commissioned by the BNHS to write the long-discussed book on some of the commoner birds of the Indian countryside in simple non-technical language for the layman. It would cover some 180 selected species and use the colour illustrations, one bird to a plate, from the Society’s wall charts which had proved popular with English-medium secondary schools in India. Terse descriptions of about 350 words each would cover such topics as Field Identification, Distribution, Habits, Food, Calls and Nesting, together with a few general chapters on Migration, Flight, Bird Watching, Usefulness of Birds to Man, in addition to the Preface and Introduction. The current format of four birds to a plate was first adopted from the fifth (1955) edition onward for reasons of economy, when new plates had to be prepared to replace the old and worn-out four-colour blocks from the wall charts, and additional species introduced. I had received these details informally from my friend and colleague, S.H. Prater (the Society’s then Curator) much earlier, and had in fact prepared rough drafts of much of the text while refugeeing in my joblessness at Kihim in 1930.

Talking of preparing the text at Kihim reminds me of an extraordinary experience with which I cannot resist interrupting this narrative. The family seaside cottage at Kihim consisted of a small all-purpose ground-floor room surrounded on three sides by a fairly wide open verandah, where most of our day was spent, and where stood my writing desk with files of notes and papers and rough drafts of the various chapters. Tehmina and I slept in a tiny garret-like bedroom upstairs. On coming down one morning I found, to my horror, all my papers in disarray, badly mauled and some of the loose sheets torn and lying scattered on the floor around the desk, some even in the garden several yards away. It was a puzzling situation for which no immediate explanation was thinkable. Nothing happened for the next two or three days, then the spook struck again with more papers destroyed, leaving me still more mystified. On the following night after the mischief was repeated I

realized that the man or beast or whatever it was, was turning into a malignant addict and it was time to take action. So I sprinkled some wood ash on the floor round the desk to see what the pug-marks would reveal. Sure enough, the culprit proved to be a dog; though why a dog should be so deeply interested in my notes as to repeat the unrewarding exercise time after time and chew up and carry off the loose sheets was difficult to guess. As there was no knowing when the next raid might occur, and at what unearthly hour of night, I worked out a suitable strategy. Dharma, our deaf old *mali*, slept in a cabin a few yards away from the main cottage. I tied one end of a string to his big toe and the other to a cow-bell at the head of my bed, where also stood in readiness my 20-bore shot gun. For this medium of communication we devised a special code of action so that I could be silently alerted while the culprit was *in flagrante delicto*! Two or three days later at 3 o'clock, pre-dawn, the cow-bell tinkled. I got out of bed quickly, clutched the gun and crept quietly down the creaky stairs. On detecting my presence the mongrel hastily jumped off the desk and was slinking away shiftily with a self-condemning guilty look—tail between hind legs and surreptitious backward squints from the corners of his eyes. To make sure of keeping the miscreant out of further criminal mischief I shot him dead, with no regret whatever. But to this day I wonder at his extraordinarily aberrant behaviour: what had that miserable cur found so rewarding in raiding my desk and ravaging my indigestible papers, not once but again and again?

The drafts of the various chapters were tried out on Tehmina, who was of the greatest help in moderating the language. She had a remarkable 'feeling' for colloquial English prose style and ironed out stilted passages to make for pleasanter reading. Readability is a feature that many reviewers and readers of *The Book of Indian Birds*, and my later books, have frequently gone out of the way to remark upon, to my very special gratification.

Among my favourite and most admired naturalist writers are W. H. Hudson and E. H. Aitken (better known as EHA). Their writings are models of how even prosaic dry-as-dust

factual information can be made pleasurable reading with a little extra attention to honing and polishing, which EHA at least was known invariably to pay before publishing his facile, seemingly effortless, essays. I set great store by readability, and consider the extra time and effort involved in achieving this well worthwhile.

Since this was the pioneer of colour-illustrated books on Indian birds in the now-popular Field Guide format, and is acknowledged as largely responsible for creating and fostering much of the interest in birds and birdwatching seen in the country today, it may interest the reader to know some of the vital statistics of the publication. The first edition of 3,000 copies appeared in August 1941; it was printed throughout on imported art paper at the Times of India Press, Bombay, with a published price of Rs 14. *The Book* dealt with 181 species of the commoner and more familiar birds of the countryside; the number of included species increased progressively with each edition, as unfortunately also the price. The latest (eleventh) edition of 10,000 copies published in July 1980 covers 280 species and is priced Rs 60. The total number of copies published in all the previous ten editions together was 46,000—each edition averaging about 4,500 copies.

The Book was lucky in getting off to a flying start, since the war with Japan was on at the time and large numbers of British and Allied troops were constantly in transit through Bombay on their way to and from South-East Asia. They included many keen birdwatchers seeking just the kind of introduction to unfamiliar tropical species that the book provided. Among the distinguished earliest users of the book have been Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, an ardent nature-lover, who got a copy autographed by me while lodged in Dehra Dun jail (c. 1942) to send as a birthday present to his daughter Indira, then herself in Naini jail. In her Foreword to *Our Birds* written for children by Shri Rajeshwar Prasad Narain Sinha (published in 1959), Mrs Gandhi recalls the circumstance, saying, 'Like most Indians I took birds for granted until my father sent me Shri Sálim Ali's delightful book from Dehra Dun jail and opened my eyes to an entirely new world. Only then did I realize how

much I had been missing.' Later still, as Prime Minister of India and Patron of the BNHS, Mrs Gandhi, in her inaugural speech at the Society's centennial (15 September 1983), again referred to this incident, saying, 'I had always loved animals but I didn't know much about birds until the high walls of Naini prison shut us off from them, and for the first time I paid attention to bird song. I noted the songs, and later, on my release, was able to identify the birds from Dr Sálím Ali's book.'

I discovered that Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, while imprisoned in Ahmadnagar jail as President of the Indian National Congress, following the Quit India session in 1942 and Gandhiji's call to Do or Die, had also consulted the book, borrowed from his fellow-prisoner Jawaharlal in a neighbouring cell, for certain details of his truly classic story about the irrepressible pair of House Sparrows that had chosen to nest in a hole above his bed. *The Book* has been translated and published in Hindi and Punjabi and an Urdu translation is in preparation.

Upon the final winding up of the Tavoy business concern of J. A. Ali Bros. & Co. and a splitting of the liabilities between the two partners, my share of indebtedness to various parties for interest-bearing loans and investments in the firm had been startling. During the several years practically without income after my return to Bombay, and the slow rate of liquidation of such assets as I had inherited from the business, the interest continued to mount alarmingly. At one stage it looked desperately unlikely that at the rate of repayment which I then found possible my liabilities would ever be cleared. The backlog kept rocketing from year to year in spite of some of my creditors having considerably agreed to waive the interest, and some even to whittle down the quantum. Even so, my liabilities continued to give me sleepless nights now and again, and I despaired of ever getting the millstone off my neck. It was at this point that *The Book of Indian Birds* came like a godsend. From the royalties of the first four or five editions I was able to pay off all the creditors in full, to my eternal mental relief.

After the success of *The Book of Indian Birds* and *The Birds of Kutch*, which followed it in 1945, summer-vacationing

friends suggested my doing a similar colour-illustrated guide to the birds commonly met with at and around the popular hill resorts in the Himalaya, and the Nilgiri and other peninsular hills. With encouragement from Oxford University Press, of which R.E. Hawkins was then General Manager of the Indian Branch and who had published my *Birds of Kutch*, and with the ready compliance of G.M. Henry (the well known Ceylon bird illustrator) to paint the plates on a royalty-sharing basis, an edition of 10,000 copies of *Indian Hill Birds* was printed in the UK in 1949 by the photo-offset process. Henry's illustrations were superb, and altogether the book received flattering reviews in scientific periodicals, Indian and foreign, and encomiums from users within the country. In spite of this the sales were disappointing for the publishers, and the first edition took over twenty-five years to sell out! The book remained out of print for five years, during which, however, there was a marked build-up of interest in bird watching within the country as well as a spurt in ornithological and wildlife tourism from abroad. The demand for bird books shot up in consequence, and OUP felt impelled to bring out in 1979 a straight reprint of *Indian Hill Birds* in its original format, pending a revision for the second edition, followed soon after by third and fourth impressions. A measure of the worldwide monetary inflation and rise of costs in the interval is seen from the fact that the original published price of the book, Rs 20 in 1949, had shot up to Rs 140 for the 1984 reprint! But then, the plates are still printed in nine colours from the original film separations.

Sir C.P. Ramaswamy Aiyer, a reputed Sanskrit scholar and leading lawyer of Madras, was Dewan of the princely state of Travancore in the 1950s, and by virtue of this office also Chancellor of the University at Trivandrum. He was apparently impressed by my scientific report on the ornithology of Travancore and Cochin, which had appeared serially in the *Journal* of the BNHS between 1935 and 1937, and decided to get it published in the form of a 'popular' colour-illustrated book for the benefit of zoology students, foresters, tourists and others, and granted a subsidy to Oxford University Press for the purpose. The excellent illustrations were commissioned

from D.V. Cowen (Mrs V. Gardner Lewis), a keen and competent bird watcher whose reputation as a bird painter already stood established through her work in *The Book of Indian Birds*. Five hundred copies of an edition of 1,000 were taken for distribution by Travancore University (published price Rs 35), and the rest ran out of print within a very short time, leaving a considerable unsatisfied demand, albeit perhaps not large enough to warrant immediate commercial reprinting. The book thus remained out of print until 1969, by which time in the linguistic realignment of the Indian states Travancore and Cochin had absorbed the adjoining Malayalam district of Malabar and emerged on the map as Kerala. Meanwhile, the demand for a second edition of the bird book had also been building up, and again through financial assistance from the University a revised and enlarged edition of the book to include Malabar was published, this time as *Birds of Kerala*, priced the same as before. This was exceptionally good value at the time and, like its predecessor, this edition also soon sold out. After a few years in the wilderness the Kerala Forest Department has recently supported OUP in a third printing of the book in commemoration of the Golden Jubilee of the Periyar Wildlife Sanctuary in March 1985.

My first casual experience of a tropical rain-forest had been in Tenasserim during the early Tavoy days, and ever since then I had longed for an opportunity to look closer at this type of evergreen forest and explore more intensively its birds and natural history. The Travancore bird survey, in part, had fulfilled that ambition, and in the event proved perhaps the most enjoyable and rewarding of all my regional surveys. Writing up the scientific report had given me special pleasure because of the non-traditional approach I adopted, with stress on ecology rather than systematics throughout. For this departure the report had received felicitous notices from all sides and I was happy to be able to present it to a wider circle of bird students and the public in a more convenient book form. Indeed, in many ways I consider *Birds of Kerala* the most ego-satisfying of all my books, no less so than *The Book of Indian Birds*.

As a result of my several bird-collecting and field-study expeditions in Sikkim in the 1950s sponsored by Loke Wan Tho (about which I have spoken earlier), Oxford University Press, with financial assistance from the Chogyal's government, published in 1962 *The Birds of Sikkim*, priced at Rs 30, with colour plates by the internationally reputed artists Paul Barruel (France), David Reid-Henry (UK) and Robert Scholz (Germany). Of the edition of 2,000 copies, half went to the Sikkim government for complimentary distribution to state guests and others, and the rest sold out within a year or so, and thereafter the book remained unobtainable. A second impression was contemplated, but meanwhile the Chogyal's state got pitchforked into the Indian Union and that was the end of that! By way of advance publicity for the book, which had been suffering an inordinately prolonged gestation, OUP brought out a slim *Picture Book of Sikkim Birds* containing all the seventeen colour plates, together with short write-ups about the birds. These booklets were very good value at Rs 5, and were popular among Sikkim schools and visiting bird watchers.

A thumbnail sketch of the genesis and history of the *Handbook of the Birds of India and Pakistan* by myself and Dillon Ripley is given elsewhere. An amusing sidelight on publishers and publishing strategies when I was prospecting for a possible publisher for the book is interesting to recall. I had offered the book to Oxford University Press, who had published most of my earlier work, and they were clearly interested. However, since a ten-volume work with over a hundred colour plates would be a major long-term undertaking involving an unusually heavy editorial and financial outlay and more than normally heavy business risk, they were dragging their feet on a final decision. It was expected that the book's biggest market would have to be the country itself, since Pakistan was out of bounds for Indian exports, and India was as yet not sufficiently bird-minded to bear the entire brunt. It was feared that the foreign market would not amount to much for a restricted title like this one, and could not be relied upon. In the midst of all this uncertainty the telephone rang one afternoon. It was Mr William Collins, head of the famous British

publishing house, who had arrived from the UK that morning, asking if I would come and see him at the Taj Mahal Hotel. He had apparently got word from his sleuths that I was working on such a book and wanted to know if this was true, and whether I had found a prospective publisher for it. I told him the OUP, my usual publishers, had expressed interest but were dithering as it meant a heavy and speculative financial commitment. Collins said, 'I want you to know that we would be definitely interested to publish the book should OUP decide to turn it down.' This news, conveyed to OUP, clinched their decision with exemplary promptness and our contract was signed almost overnight! It was a bold step on the part of Mr Hawkins, but I am glad the publishers have had no cause to regret their decision. In the event it has proved well worthwhile for OUP, both as a commercial proposition and as a matter of publishing prestige. Second editions of each volume are gradually being published, and the imaginatively conceived *Compact Edition*, which incorporates all ten volumes within one cover, appeared in 1983. I cannot escape the feeling, however, that it was really that timely phonecall from Mr Collins that set the hesitant ball rolling!

A couple of years after the *Handbook* was completed, in September 1976, I received a questionnaire from one Shri Narayan Dutt, Editor of *Navneet Hindi Digest* of Bombay, who was preparing to publish a biographical sketch of me. One of his questions was 'How many hours a day did you devote to its [the *Handbook*'s] writing and did you write in your own hand or dictate it?' Since several inquirers have also asked similar questions from time to time, my answer to Shri Dutt will hold for all. I said,

I usually worked from 10 to 12 hours a day (sometimes 14 or 15) with short breaks for meals, etc. After the preliminary work of library and museum research, which started before 1953, the actual writing of the volumes took about ten years. . . . I prepared all the first drafts in my own hand (no dictating) and devoted a great deal of time to chopping and changing, rephrasing passages and altering words, and compressing sentences as much as possible so as to be terse and to the point. I firmly believe that besides providing factual scientific information to the reader it

is just as important to make the account pleasurable reading. . . . I then had the mauled handwritten draft typed out in triple spacing and subjected it to further scrutiny and the same vetting and polishing process, often getting it re-typed a second time before feeling sufficiently satisfied to have it finally fair-typed for the printer. It was thus a lengthy and time-consuming process—but I found that it pays!

The bird survey of Sikkim had whetted my appetite for a more intensive exploration of adjoining Bhutan than had been possible for Frank Ludlow and George Sherrif in 1933 and 1934. The lack then of roads for wheeled traffic and of bridges over torrential streams and awesome gorges had restricted their movements in this wild and rugged terrain to mule and porter transport, and given to their expeditions the aura of real adventures, which in fact they were. A fascinating narrative of them may be found in *The Ibis* for 1937. In the 1960s I was invited by His Majesty the Druk Gyalpo Jigme Dorji Wangchuk, a discerning shikari-naturalist, keenly interested in wildlife conservation, to study the birds of Bhutan. I agreed to produce for him as *quid pro quo* thereafter an illustrated bird book like the one for Sikkim which he ardently wanted. He laid on all facilities in the way of transport, camping and commissariat through the Border Roads Organization—a semi-military engineering force of the Indian government which was then aiding Bhutan to build a network of arterial roads up to and along its northern international border. They had succeeded in constructing terrifying roads that teetered on the brink of precipitous, impossible-looking contours of rugged mountains, with tight twists and turns and awesome hairpin bends with sheer vertical drops of hundreds of metres, down which many vehicles had rolled during the construction. They reminded me forcibly of a notice on a mountain road I had once read about; it said 'No entry. Road in dangerous condition. Survivors will be prosecuted.' To escape possible prosecution even here in Bhutan we strictly followed those instructions!

These roads are masterpieces of skilful engineering and alignment. Though often blasted out of solid vertical rock, the gradients are so cleverly maintained along the contours that they are never too steep for heavily-laden motor trucks and

armoured vehicles. The calamitous drawback of not having strategic roads to the Tibetan border through a friendly 'foreign' country like Bhutan for defense in time of need was dramatically realized when in 1962 the Chinese marched into NEFA (now Arunachal Pradesh), astraddle our only approach to the frontier via Bomdila, leaving no alternative route by which their incursion into Indian territory could have been stemmed.

Six separate collecting expeditions were mounted in Bhutan between 1966 and 1973, of four to eight weeks each, covering the eastern, central and western parts of the kingdom fairly thoroughly. Some of them were jointly conducted with Dr and Mrs Ripley, and the eminent Indian ornithologist, Dr Biswamoy Biswas, of the Zoological Survey of India. As would be expected, the birdlife did not prove significantly different from Sikkim or Arunachal, and it therefore seemed redundant to produce a separate bird book for Bhutan when there was already a comprehensive one for adjacent Sikkim. The king, with characteristic reasonableness, readily agreed with my suggestion that it would be far more realistic to alter the format of the proposed book to that of a conventional field guide for the entire Eastern Himalaya, i.e. the section extending from east-central Nepal to easternmost Arunachal Pradesh, which formed a single physiographical unit. In addition to meeting much of the cost of painting the plates, the Druk Gyalpo committed his government to purchase 500 copies of this *Field Guide to the Birds of the Eastern Himalayas* by way of publishing subsidy to OUP (unbecomingly repudiated by the successor government after the death of the king because the name 'Bhutan' did not specifically appear in the title!). The Chogyal's government had likewise undertaken to purchase 300 copies 'to start with', but by the time the book got published the Chogyal's government had gone with the wind. Despite these unexpected reverses the publication of the *Field Guide* in 1977 was gratifyingly received by users and reviewers alike. By 1983, even with the published price raised to Rs 130, the book had gone through three reprints, and is still going strong.

The National Book Trust, India, was set up in 1957 by the Government of India on the initiative of Pandit Jawaharlal

Nehru as an autonomous organization, primarily with the object of creating a movement in the country to make the people increasingly book-minded. The Trust would produce and encourage the production of good literature in Hindi, English and all the major Indian languages, and make it available to the public cheaply. One of the series of books it had planned was 'India—the Land and People'. The books in this series were to be written by acknowledged authorities in their respective fields in simple non-technical language for the general instruction of the 'common man', well printed and attractively got up, and available at a price the common man could afford. In 1965 or thereabouts I was requested by Dr B.V. Keskar, the Chairman of the Trust, to do a book on Common Birds, more or less on the lines of my *Book of Indian Birds*, which had proved its effectiveness in rousing public interest in birds and birdwatching but whose price was somewhat beyond the range of the average low-income reader. The book would be translated into all the major Indian languages so that its message could receive the widest circulation. I was fully preoccupied with the *Handbook* at the time, but saw the NBT's point, as well as the need and the opportunity, and was loth to turn down the request. So I offered to produce such a book, but jointly with a competent co-author. My niece Laeeq (Mrs Zafar Futehally), a keen nature lover and an imaginative freelance writer in English with a pleasing fluent style, had been in her earlier years among the coterie of my enthusiastic little *chelas* in the birdwatching game, and had become quite proficient in the process. Laeeq was now persuaded to take up the assignment, and with minimal technical help and scientific guidance from me she soon produced a highly readable text fulfilling all the Trust's objectives. *Common Birds* has in fact proved to be one of the most—if not *the* most—popular titles in the 'Land and People' series. Its popularity is evidenced by the fact that between 1967 and 1978 the English edition ran through four reprints. This was followed by a completely new English edition in a somewhat modified format using new plates—several species on each—specially painted for it by the upcoming young bird artist of Rajkot, K.P. Jadav. It has been

translated into Hindi and nearly all the major regional languages—Marathi, Gujarati, Punjabi, Oriya, Malayalam, Tamil, Telugu, Bengali and Assamese—in most of which it has run through two or more reprints. *Common Birds* continues to enjoy the same popularity in the linguistic regions as the English edition does overall.

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Prizes

When I was a boy, and even until fairly recently, zoology in India meant chiefly anatomy, physiology and taxonomy taught in the classroom or laboratory. Life history studies of animals under natural conditions out of doors hardly counted, and ecology and ethology—words now fashionable and on every aspiring lip—were seldom heard. Extra-mural work consisted chiefly of collecting and preserving zoological specimens for classifying, dissecting and describing, which seemed to be the main field activity. Perhaps one of the few honourable exceptions but at a somewhat later date was Sunderlal Hora, the eminent ichthyologist who ended up as Director of the Zoological Survey of India. Hora's researches on the biology and ecology of Indian freshwater fishes, their adaptation to specialized life conditions and the curiously interrupted geographical distribution of Indo-Malayan species were refreshingly unconventional and earned him international renown.

My own chief interest in bird study all along has been in the living bird, its ecology and biogeography. Whether in scientific papers or books, my main thrust has been ecology—a 'contagion' reinforced and given direction by my contact in Germany with such pathfinding ornithologists as Erwin Stresemann and Oskar Heinroth. One of the few Indian biologists to recognize and appreciate the merit of this 'new' ecological trend in the presentation of my scientific field survey reports would of course be Dr Hora himself. And it was on his appraisal of my work-style that the Asiatic Society of Bengal awarded me its coveted 'Joy Gobinda Law Gold Medal' in

1953, during Hora's presidency, 'For Researches in Asiatic Zoology'—as the citation read. This medal was the first of several such recognitions that have since come my way. While some of these awards may be more prestigious in the international and scientific context, e.g. the gold medal of the British Ornithologists' Union in 1967, which I was the first non-British person to receive, I attach greater sentimental value to the Asiatic Society's medal because it is the first recognition for ornithology to an *Indian*. Also because I consider the first award of a series is always given after an independent and more critical appraisal of merit, and often serves as a convenient trend-setter for others that may follow. By the same token I regard my science doctorate (*Honoris Causa*) from the Aligarh Muslim University as sentimentally more prestigious since it was based on the first critical appraisal of my work. Though ranking no less in my esteem, the honorary doctorates that came to me subsequently, namely from Delhi University in 1973 and Andhra University in 1978, need not necessarily have been altogether so.

The Bombay Natural History Society, with which my destiny seems linked in one way or another, and more closely since the 'retreat' from Burma in 1923, has spearheaded the movement for the preservation of wildlife in the country and been responsible, directly or indirectly, for practically all the game laws and wild birds and animals-protection legislation during the century of its existence. I have been a keen shikari from early boyhood but have felt increasingly concerned at the all too rapid and dramatic depletion of our forests and wildlife, particularly since World War II. This has accelerated with the repatriation of conservation-minded British forestry officials, the slackening of law and order and the disappearance of the princely states—which were most effectively keen on the preservation of wildlife. To maintain the BNHS's time-honoured tradition of nature conservation I did whatever was possible under the circumstances in my capacity as Honorary Secretary of the Society and Editor of the *Journal*—positions I had willy-nilly inherited—to keep the good work going and propagate it in every possible way.

The World Wildlife Fund (WWF), which had come into being through the initiative of a group of eminent nature conservationists in the UK, Europe and the USA in 1961 with the object of raising funds through international appeals for financing the nature conservation projects of the IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources), had succeeded in interesting Mr J. Paul Getty, the super-wealthy American oil magnate, to institute the international J. Paul Getty Wildlife Conservation Prize of \$50,000. This ranks in prestige with the Nobel Prize for other disciplines. In due course I received a request for nomination of an individual or organization to be chosen for the first award, in 1974, by an international jury of thirteen outstanding conservationists of world stature. I felt happy at this opportunity of publicizing the sterling achievements of the BNHS in the cause of wildlife conservation and nature education in India, which, by default, were unfortunately so little known abroad. It was disappointing that my nomination drew a blank that year, but at least I had the satisfaction of bringing the Society's work into focus with the international jury. That was that. The 1974 Prize went to Mr Felipe Benavides of Peru for his outstanding achievement in saving the gravely endangered South American vicuna. Then, first thing before breakfast one morning in January 1976, the telephone rang. It was the unlikely post master of the Bandra sub-post office asking if I would please come over about a telegram he had just received from Washington. Asked why he couldn't have it sent over to my residence in the normal way, he said he would like to deliver it to me in person with his congratulations as it announced my winning a prize. I was greatly puzzled since I wasn't expecting any prizes, and felt certain there was some mistake. The telegram, handed to me by the post master, bubbling with friendliness, bore my address all right. It read: 'Please keep confidential you are recipient of J. Paul Getty Wildlife Conservation Prize for 1976. Details will follow in a few days. Thomas Lovejoy [Co-ordinator for the Award Jury] WWF-US'. I still felt it was obviously a case of mistaken identity—Sálim Ali for BNHS—because if anyone had nominated me personally I should certainly have known.

It took some time to discover how it all happened. It transpired that my nomination had been filed by a member of the American Senate, Mr Charles McC. Mathias Jr. of Maryland, suspectedly inspired by a mutual friend intimately familiar with the activities of the BNHS, and my connection with it, and a constant well-wisher and supporter. A felicitous citation accompanied the prize, also looking suspiciously inspired by the same source!

On discovering the identity of my 'godfather' I wrote to Senator Mathias to thank him for his unostentatious courtesy and to express my joy and utter surprise at the award. His charming reply dated 8 March 1976 said, 'It was an honor for me to be able to nominate you for the second J. Paul Getty Wildlife Conservation Prize. I want to thank you for winning and thereby causing my judgement to be confirmed by the distinguished international jury. This honor is well deserved and I am pleased it has come to you. . . . Congratulations!' I was doubly pleased to learn later that the choice of the jury was near-unanimous. The Congressional Record of the US Senate of 25 March 1976 carries a report of Senator Mathias's address to the President reading:

Mr President, several years ago, when on a visit to India, I was asked by Prime Minister Mrs Gandhi whether I had met the noted Indian ornithologist, Sálím Ali. When I replied that I had not, she immediately arranged for me to do so and thereby opened the door to one of the most pleasant and interesting experiences that I can remember. As a result I spent a day with Sálím Ali in the national park near Bombay. The privilege was not only in having him open my eyes to the beauty of nature in the jungle, but in sharing his experiences and observations on all aspects of Indian life as he has seen it in a dramatic period of history. I learnt something that day about the birds of India, but even more about the qualities of human nature that are shared by all mankind everywhere. When the World Wildlife Fund requested nominations for the J. Paul Getty Conservation Prize I was happy to propose the name of Sálím Ali. I was of course delighted when Vice President Rockefeller announced that Dr Ali had been chosen to receive the \$50,000 award—the largest such award given today for distinguished achievement in conservation. . . . Dr Ali has been credited with being a 'creator of an environment for conservation in India'.

Within hours of the announcement of the award in the Bombay morning papers there was a flood of telephone calls from bankers, investment brokers and miscellaneous gentry of that breed, all giving gratuitous advice on how to invest for highest returns, preferably in their own excellent concerns! Also from inquisitive nosey parkers wanting to know what I proposed to do with all that money. My uniform answer to all such, short and sweet, was that I was meaning to eat it all up quietly by myself, but now I saw there were too many people looking! In the event the lion's share of the prize money went to the BNHS—a long-cherished dream come true—to form the nucleus of its proposed Sálím Ali Nature Conservation Fund, later handsomely augmented by munificent donations from the Loke family of Singapore in memory of Loke Wan Tho's regard and admiration for the Society.

Due to the short notice, I had been unable to attend the award-giving ceremony at New York in February (1976) to receive the Getty Prize in person. It was accepted on my behalf by our Ambassador, Mr T. N. Kaul, with a felicitous speech which was much applauded. Later that year I was at San Francisco for another WWF function. I recall my first meeting there with my Getty Prize predecessor, Felipe Benavides, amusingly described by him as 'the \$100,000 handshake'!

For the purpose of keeping a record, and to prove to Doubting Thomases like some of my late lamented elders that even such a seemingly futile occupation as birdwatching is not entirely barren of rewards if pursued with persistence and dedication, this chapter must close with a checklist of the awards and distinctions it brought to me over the years.

- 1953 Asiatic Society's 'Joy Gobinda Law Medal' for 'Researches in Asiatic Zoology'
- 1958 Padma Bhushan by the President of India for 'Distinguished Service to Indian Ornithology'
- 1958 Doctor of Science Degree (*Honoris Causa*) by Aligarh Muslim University
- 1967 Union Gold Medal of the British Ornithologists' Union

- 1969 John C. Phillips Memorial Medal 'For Distinguished Service in International Conservation' by the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources
- 1970 Sunderlal Hora Memorial Medal by the Indian National Science Academy for 'Outstanding Contributions to Indian Ornithology'
- 1973 Doctor of Science Degree (*Honoris Causa*) by Delhi University
- 1973 Pavlovsky Centenary Memorial Medal by USSR Academy of Medical Science
- 1973 Insignia of Officer in the Order of the Golden Ark by H.R.H. Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands
- 1976 J. Paul Getty International Prize for Wildlife Conservation
- 1976 Padma Vibhushan by the President of India for continued distinction in ornithology
- 1978 Doctor of Science Degree (*Honoris Causa*) by Andhra University
- 1979 C.V. Raman Medal of the Indian National Science Academy
- 1981 Asiatic Society of Bangladesh Gold Medal 'For Distinguished Contribution to Ornithology of the Indian Subcontinent'
- 1981 Rabindra Nath Tagore plaque of the Asiatic Society, Calcutta
- 1982 National Research Professorship in Ornithology by the Government of India
- 1983 International Conservation Award of the National Wildlife Federation, USA
- 1983 National Award (gold medal) for Wildlife Conservation of the Government of India

The Thrills of Birdwatching

One of the standard questions I have inevitably to face is about what thrilling adventures I have had in a lifetime of exploring for birds. My standard answer must seem disappointing to those who expect to hear tales of derring-do. Ornithology as a hobby or profession or persuasion, whatever one may choose to call it, though full of adventures and rewards and disappointments, is by its very nature one of the most peaceable pursuits of the out-of-doors. It is certainly not lacking in excitements and thrills, though these may be of a different kind from what the normal enquirer expects. The excitement lies in ferreting clues and then following them up step by step to the discovery or confirmation of a fact or facts, of which one has obtained a suspicion or hunch. It was while living jobless in the seaside cottage of the Latif family at Kihim in 1930 that I got one of my most rewarding thrills of this kind when I fortuitously hit upon the first correct interpretation of the extraordinary breeding biology of the Baya Weaver bird.

I had grown up only on the traditional accounts of the nesting habits published in literature which had come down to us from book to book. These were interesting enough in themselves for a keen bird photographer, as I was, to want to record on film. But while concealed in a canvas hide perched ten feet up on a step-ladder, a few feet away from the nests, I noticed some unorthodox goings on in the colony which clearly showed that the birds had not read the text books. A few hours in this hide each day, and copious notes and diagrams of the proceedings in the colony, gave me a pretty good hunch of

what was probably happening, till at the end of a few weeks it was possible to piece together with some confidence the general pattern of the bayas' breeding biology. Since then the new interpretation has been tested and re-tested and confirmed by myself and other researchers, and with further refinements is now accepted as what might be called the 'authorized version'.

In brief, the findings are that the male baya, who in his breeding livery is a handsome little sparrow-like bird, largely brilliant golden yellow, is an artful polygamist. He may acquire any number of wives, from two to four, sometimes even five—not all at once in the harem style but one by one progressively, depending upon his capacity to provide them each with a home. The male alone is responsible for building the nest; the female has no hand in it. Males select a *babool* or palm tree to hang their compactly woven retort-shaped nests, and several males build together in a colony which may sometimes contain a hundred nests or more. At a particular stage in the construction, when the nest is about half finished, there is suddenly, one fine morning, an invasion by a party of females prospecting for desirable homes. They arrive at the colony in a body, amidst great noise and excitement from the welcoming males, and deliberately visit nest after nest to inspect its workmanship, as it were. Some nests are approved, others are rejected. While the examination is in progress the builder clings on the outside, excitedly flapping his wings in invitation and awaiting her verdict. If the female is satisfied with the structure she just takes possession of it and accepts his impetuous advances. A hurried copulation takes place on the 'chinstrap' of the helmet-like half-built nest, and the pair bond is sealed. Thereafter the male resumes his building activity and soon completes the nest with its long entrance tube. The female lays her eggs within, incubates them and brings up the family. This is entirely her responsibility, and it is rarely—and only after his building impulse has finally subsided—that the male takes a hand in foraging for the chicks. Having completed this nest the male proceeds almost immediately to start a second one a few feet away. At the appropriate half-built stage, another house-hunting female may in like manner take possession of this

second nest, and the whole process is then repeated. Thus the male baya may find himself the happy husband of several wives and proud father of several families at practically one and the same time. It sometimes happens that for some feminine foible, female after female fails to accept a certain nest. Undeterred, the male abandons the half-built structure and promptly tries again. In every baya colony there are usually to be seen a number of such half-built abandoned nests. This is the prosaic explanation for them and unfortunately not the more popular lyrical one that they are for the use of the male to swing himself and sing love songs to his incubating spouse nearby!

With the richness and variety of bird life in India, exciting discoveries of a similar kind are awaiting to be made by any birdwatcher who has the requisite enthusiasm and perseverance. Although as yet its devotees here are limited, it is refreshing to find that birdwatching as a hobby is growing rapidly in popularity, along with other civilized outdoor pursuits.

While the field study of birds, 'birdwatching' as it is popularly called, is a peaceful enough occupation, it is not entirely without occasional physical thrills and even hazards. In elephant-ridden jungles in South India for instance, I have frequently found myself in uncomfortably disturbing situations. A wild elephant, suddenly come upon at close quarters—a situation by no means uncommon in parts of Karnataka and Kerala—can be an unnerving experience, almost invariably resulting in the undignified spectacle, for the elephant, of the ornithologist in full flight in the opposite direction. In actual fact there is little danger from a wild elephant unless it happens to be a rogue or a female with a small calf. However, it is bad diplomacy in close-up situations, especially with the wind in the wrong direction, to wait for this to become apparent before taking the only discreet action. For it may well be that in tall grass country, in even the most innocent stampede of a frightened herd, the ornithologist may become an unscheduled casualty. Discretion and not valour is what such situations demand.

The diminutive Cochin Forest Tramway was proudly acclaimed in its time to be the cheapest run railway system in

the country, or was it the world? I can well believe either. Its guard, complete with a once-white uniform, the regulation white (once) sola topee, and whistle and flags, drew a salary of Rs 25 per month after his ten years of approved service, and its German-built engine (2 ft gauge) ran on fuel wood cut from the surrounding forest, often as it chugged along. In the 65 kilometres or so of its length from Chalakudi to Parambikulam, the track lay through some magnificent hilly country covered with bamboo and dense mixed moist-deciduous forest with pockets of wet evergreen here and there in the valleys and along streams. The tramway, originally laid by the Cochin Forest Administration for transporting logs from the interior, worked on a combined system of wire ropes, capstan pulleys, weights and counter-weights. The locomotive hauled the train along the flats and gravity did the rest on the inclines, some of which looked terrifyingly steep. The loaded down-coming trucks hauled the up-going empty ones by counterpoise, regulated by a brake drum at the head of each incline, of which there were seven or nine, as far as I remember. Normally the train carried no passengers, but when a forest officer on duty or some visiting VIP was travelling up the line a corrugated iron wagon like a horse van was attached, with chairs placed within.

This is how our Survey party travelled in 1933 to Kuriarkutti, where the government camp-shed stood close beside the track. The train was halted alongside the entrance to the compound and the baggage and equipment unloaded and transferred to the bungalow. It was great fun being hauled up the inclines with wire ropes that hadn't been renewed since the tramway was installed twenty or more years ago, and therefore provided an element of adventure that varied with the steepness of each slope. I remember how every now and again live cinders from the engine would come flying in with a cloud of smut and wood smoke and land on our baggage and clothing. Tehmina's sari and my shirt had several holes burnt through in this way before the journey ended. Forty miles in eight hours was good going; the next station beyond Kuriarkutti, Parambikulam, about eight kilometres away, was the terminus of the tramway, with a forest depot and timber yard, where all the logs were assembled and stacked for transport to Chalakudi.

My next journey by the romantic Cochin Forest Tramway was in February 1946, shortly before it was dismantled, alas, to make way for the gigantic Parambikulam hydro-electric project, with its huge dam and reservoir, which has completely submerged Parambikulam and all the lovely country around it. Enquiry confirmed that we were being hauled up the inclines by the self-same wire ropes as thirteen years earlier, which knowledge made the journey feel distinctly more adventurous. We reached Parambikulam just as it was getting dark. In the verandah of the forest bungalow by the side of the tramway station I found a large squatted congregation of the local *adivasis* (Kadar), and in their midst, sprawled in one of those standard dak bungalow Victorian armchairs with legs splayed out on the extended arm rests, a bare-footed 'topless' European male of sorts in crumpled khaki shorts.

We soon introduced ourselves. He was an Austrian anthropologist, Baron Omar Rolf Ehrenfels, incidentally a recent convert (of convenience?) to Islam, who had escaped to India just before Hitler's famous Anschluss, and was camping in the area to study the tribals. He claimed ornithology to be his second love and expressed great keenness on accompanying me when I went out bird collecting next morning. Led by a forest guard, armed with a .410 collecting gun and dust-shot ammunition, and followed by Omar, we were stalking single file along a narrow animal trail through dense tall grassland about five feet high—the right kind of habitat for the Broad-tailed Grass Warbler (*Schoenicola platyura*), on which my thoughts were bent. Upon turning a bend in the path the forest guard suddenly ducked, excitedly pointing in front. I just glimpsed the head of a tusker elephant striding down the same path from the opposite direction, and turned to flee as fast as I could, motioning to Omar, who was ten yards behind me, to do likewise. I don't know what he made of this gesture, but I have not seen anything react more quickly. He spun round with the agility of a cat and sprinted as fast as his long legs could carry, looking neither to right nor left. The baron soon out-distanced me by a hundred yards, and it looked as if he would never stop running. He did so finally another hundred yards further, and it was only when I got up to him hot and panting

that he breathlessly ejaculated in suppressed undertones, 'What was it?' It was an amusing incident of which, as of the baron's speed and stamina, I am always reminded whenever I see a wild tusker looking at me! In this case the poor elephant had perhaps never noticed our presence. He veered away into the grass before reaching the bend and was not seen again.

Ornithology may sometimes even entail hazards of a different kind. I recall one particularly hair-raising incident along the Himalayan trail from Almora to the Lipu Lekh Pass on my way to Lake Manasarovar and Mt Kailas in 1945, a few years before the Dragon swallowed Tibet. It was at a particularly narrow part of the trail with a thousand feet of vertical scarp on one side and the roaring Kali river some 300 feet vertically down on the other. I had walked ahead of the porters while they were striking camp and was all by myself. Just at that moment a tiny bird—how well I remember that Yellownaped Yuhina!—got up to the top of a bush, some yards away on the flanking hillside. Just as I got it in the field of my glasses, it hopped a bit further up, so to get a better view I took a step back, with the glasses still glued to my eyes, and entirely unmindful of where I was standing with my back to the abyss. As I did so, I felt a small pebble slip from under my heel and heard a faint continuing clatter as it went rolling down the hill. Still unmindful of anything untoward I casually looked back over my shoulder to see what it was all about. What I saw literally made my hair stand on end. In a flash I realized that I was on the very edge of beyond—two inches more and I would have followed that rollicking pebble. The great leap forward I made at that instant would have done credit to Mao's reforming zeal. I am wondering to this day what my porters would have made of my mysterious disappearance when they reached the end of the day's march and found me missing, since finding any trace of a vanished ornithologist in that rocky gorge of the tumultuous river would indeed have been purely accidental.

As a boy I had found it far pleasanter to be chasing birds in pleasant places than doing ridiculous sums in elementary mensuration in the classroom. Since then I have watched birds through half a century and more, chiefly for the pleasure and

elation of the spirit they have afforded. Birdwatching provided the excuse for removing myself to where every prospect pleases—up in the mountains or deep in the jungles—away from the noisy rough and tumble of the dubious civilization of this mechanical high-speed age. A form of escapism, maybe, but one that hardly needs justification.

Epilogue

'The advantage of doing one's praising for oneself is that one can lay it on so thick, and exactly in the right places'—so observed Samuel Butler. In writing my autobiography I have tried to keep this wise dictum constantly in view to avoid the temptation of laying it on too thick even in the right places, but with what success I cannot tell. Most of my correspondence, especially from the field, was largely hand-written, and copies were seldom kept; therefore in laying it on I had perforce to rely largely on memory jogged by a judicious extrapolation of the one-way-traffic correspondence, such as has managed to survive through the years, and from faded syncopated shorthand scribbles in field notebooks and specimen registers. I did not keep a regular narrative diary myself but, wherever possible, have drawn eclectically on the recordings of more industrious diarist friends who shared my various expeditions from time to time. These have supplied the keywords, as it were, but many interesting and noteworthy episodes, experiences and personalities have doubtless escaped mention. In a narrative spanning over eighty years this was inevitable. Apart from my natural history interests, perceptive interviewers have often been curious to probe deeper and into the other 'non-professional' facets of my life—my general outlook on things, my interests and hobbies, my views on various mundane matters, and my spiritual faith and beliefs. The answers to some of the questions put to me that border on the metaphysical may be taken as my Articles of Faith.

Q. But for your being English-speaking you may not have been the Sâlim Ali that science knows. It has been said that without English, India would be 'an archipelago of nations in a non-navigable sea'. Would you agree that it would be a good

thing to foster English as a link language for India? Given time and planning could not English form an all-India linguistic grid that occasions no regional resentments and keeps us in step with modern thought and progress?

A. Placed as we are today, nationally and internationally, I am convinced that in order to keep abreast with modern thought, concepts, science, technology, etc. it is not only desirable but imperative for us to foster English as a link language for India. This is not to say that all possible encouragement should not, at the same time, be accorded to the local languages and to Hindi, meaning the simple colloquial Hindustani that Gandhiji surely had in mind when he advocated Hindi as the common link language, as indeed it had and has become without anybody's special trying. In fact I consider, as many must do, that English is one of the most—perhaps *the* most—important and beneficial legacy the British have left us. It has been the chief factor in the unification of the country, in such integration as we have so far achieved, and in India making a mark in the international sphere. Indeed it seems astonishing to me that even people whom we are otherwise prepared to recognize as wise and intelligent, and to accept as our leaders, should be so blinkered and short-sighted as not to perceive what seems so abundantly obvious to us 'lesser breeds'!

Q. Was religion a factor in your upbringing, and does it play a role in your life now? Has the Sufi tradition influenced you?

A. Like all Muslim children at the time when I was young, and in many Muslim families even today, we were taught from an early age to read and recite the Koran parrotwise, without understanding a word of the Arabic in which it is written, and to go through the prescribed genuflections of formal prayer (*namâz*). I am sorry to confess that all this not only failed to elevate my spirituality but on the contrary rather put me off *formal* prayer for all time as a meaningless and even hypocritical performance. Critical observation in later years of some of my own ostentatiously sanctimonious elders—of their precepts vs. practices—has not helped to alter my views.

Q. Does your association with the study of a species of non-human life—birds—lead you to repudiate man's separateness

from the rest of nature? Or do you believe him to be apart from the rest of nature, fulfilling instincts other than those of hunger, procreation and self-preservation?

A. I must confess that I am an out-and-out philistine and non-believer in anything that savours of the ultra-sensory or occult. Therefore I firmly believe that man is no different from any other animal—endowed with the same basic instincts, impulses and behaviour patterns as other animals—only with a more highly evolved brain which enables him to think and act rationally while at the same time presuming to arrogate to himself, by Divine Right as it were, a dubious superiority over lesser creatures. The superb film-classic *Ape Super Ape* illustrates in a beautifully graphic way how man's emotions, instincts and behaviour are basically the same as of lower animals, only somewhat refined, as we choose to consider them. I'm afraid I'm a babe in the woods where philosophy is concerned and deem it futile, for instance, to sit cross-legged on a mountain-top and contemplate the navel, or worry about the Hereafter, or about concepts for which there is no rational basis for believing or disbelieving. I believe with the philosopher George Santayana that 'There is no cure for birth or death save to enjoy the interval'. What I strongly realize is that our present life is the *only* time when we are at the driving wheel, as it were, when we have the power to consciously regulate or control our own actions, and I consider it a gross misuse of that potential to waste our life in pondering over abstruse conjectures and abstractions for which we (at least I) find no satisfying basis. In short, I am what some would call a 'dyed-in-the-wool' materialist, but not necessarily a wicked one! From the tangible scientific evidence around me I see no difficulty in believing that man has evolved from lower beings through the process of natural selection as postulated by Darwin and refined by subsequent scientific discoveries, and that essentially he remains a Super Ape.

Q. Would you not concede that there is a non-material factor in man that marks him out from the rest? How would you place man's aesthetic and moral faculties? Would you say they arise in his more highly evolved brain?

A. Not being of a philosophic bent, I must admit that I have never given specific thought to whether the higher faculties of man, such as the aesthetic and moral, arise in the brain. Although I believe that the brain is the main centre of all perception and sensitivity—the ultimate *fons et origo* of all our faculties which in turn are moulded by it—I do not maintain that this is the *only* moving force. There is certainly, it seems to me, something like Conscience (or Inner Voice, as I think Gandhiji called it), of whose origin I will not presume to seek or offer a rational explanation. Unless we are much mistaken there is a similar aesthetic and moral sense also in animals, not often outwardly perceived by humans until it shows up visibly, as for instance in the Bower Birds of the Australian region. Here the male scrupulously clears a piece of ground, builds upon it a bower of twigs, and decorates its interior with deliberately chosen bright-coloured objects, often collected at considerable distances from the structure, obviously for the delectation of the female. Or, take our own Blackthroated Weaver Bird: at a given stage of the nest-construction (by the male only)—the stage at which the female exercises her choice from among several competing nests—the male daubs a little wet mud on it and sticks petals of gay coloured flowers, manifestly to appeal to the aesthetic sense of the prospecting female and attract her to the nest.

Q. Consider Nehru's observation: 'there is no natural conflict between free will and determinism. Life is both. Life is like a game of cards. You have no control over the hand that is dealt you. The hand corresponds to determinism; the way you play the cards corresponds to free will.' Would you exclude belief in the 'dealing of a hand'?

A. While the question of 'a hand being dealt out' goes a little over my head, I do believe that a hand *is* dealt out to each one of us, the outcome of inherited genes, I suppose, over which we have no control and which, for convenience, we call destiny or kismet. But being possessed of free will, I believe it is possible for humans to give direction to this destiny to a limited, though still considerable, extent. In other words (again using the analogy of the dealing of a hand), to play our cards to differential effect.

To a somewhat similar question I once put to a like-minded friend, Sahebzada Mahmud-uz-zaffar Khan, he pithily replied in sentiments that might be my own, as follows:

Life is neither sensuous nor saintly, but multicoloured and evanescent. To enjoy it one needs a fine palate; to understand it common sense. Religion and philosophy are therefore neither applicable nor necessary: yet paradoxically enough they persist. Hence life is also a paradox.

Another question I have frequently had to face is how I reconcile my loud advocacy of wildlife conservation with my views upholding the shooting of game for sport. To those who have never done any sport shooting it naturally seems a contradiction in terms. As I have admitted elsewhere, I have been an avid hunter in my time and gave up not as an act of contrition but for a more pragmatic reason—namely, the all-round deterioration of the wildlife position in the country, with many species pushed to the verge of extinction. A distinction must of course be made between shooting for sport and killing anyhow, merely for the sake of so many kg of meat. The former entails the scrupulous observance of time-honoured ethics, such as no shooting in the Closed Season (when the animals are breeding), the sparing of females and young, keeping within the prescribed bag limits, no shooting from vehicles at night with the aid of blinding lights or at waterholes where the animals come to drink, and so on. These are the very methods of the professional poacher. It is through his despicable activities and not through controlled legitimate hunting that wildlife has reached its present sorry plight. The presence of a legitimate sportsman in a forest other than a sanctuary or national park (which usually has, or should have, its special protective staff) is the most effective deterrent to the poacher, as has been recognized throughout the world, and a statutory ban on all shooting is definitely not the answer. When the poacher knows he is unlikely to meet a sportsman in the course of his nefarious activities, he has a perfect field day to himself. As the tiger reserves have clearly demonstrated in the last ten years, the total protection of a forest ecosystem benefits not only the tiger but also the entire habitat, enabling the prey of the tiger—the

deer and pig—to increase proportionately and maintain a natural balance. If areas that have no controlling predators like the larger cats are given proper protection, the ungulates would increase to a number beyond what the habitat can support by way of food, and unless the population is reduced by culling (why not through sport shooting?) the excess animals are bound to perish naturally through malnutrition or disease. A valuable protein-rich renewable food resource would thus be prodigally wasted. For me wildlife conservation is for down-to-earth practical purposes. This means—as internationally accepted—for scientific, cultural, aesthetic, recreational and economic reasons, and sentimentality has little to do with it. I therefore consider the current trend of conservation education as given to the young on grounds of *ahimsa* alone—something akin to the preservation of holy cows—unfortunate and totally misplaced: the interest on the capital *must* be used, while leaving the capital itself intact. This is how I interpret wildlife conservation, and believe that future generations should enjoy the same fun with it that I have had.

APPENDIX 1

Hugh Whistler's Suggestions on How to Run a Bird Survey 1931

'We are all rather agreed that certain recent surveys, particularly those of the Americans and Germans, have been examples of how *not* to go to work. They send a collector to an area and their aim is simply accumulation of a vast number of specimens, largely in order to get new forms and to get duplicates for exchange. They make no endeavour to furnish information of general or biological interest, they teach us practically nothing and their reports are merely critical remarks on skins. The result has been chiefly discredit. I want you to work on much more general and useful lines and I know that that is your own particular bent. You are a biologist and not merely a dry-as-dust closet worker, so I feel sure that we see eye to eye in this matter.

First of all we want actual specimens (1) for identification of the forms which occur in the state (2) in corroboration of your field notes (3) for record and comparison with specimens in other areas (4) for studies of plumages and moult. With Henricks as a Skinner you are relieved from the manual drudgery and expense of time that the preparation of skins implies. On my own trips I always have to waste my own time in skinning which therefore lessens my time for more important work. You will be free.

Half an hour round the camp in the morning will therefore suffice to provide Henricks with work on the series of common birds. Anyone who can fire a gun can produce half a dozen birds for him to get on with, pending the arrival of more

important things. You will then be free to work the surrounding terrain properly to make sure that no species are overlooked. In Ladakh I used to get out early and get home about noon; and generally have a short evening turn as well. If the common stuff is dealt with by an underling at the camp you yourself can confine your own attention to bringing in more important things. If you are doing a five-mile round it is waste of opportunity for you to be getting the babblers and bulbuls which are common by the camp.

On arrival at a camp you want to study a large-scale map very carefully and see what types of terrain are in the vicinity. Most birds are distributed according to terrain—especially the more interesting ones—so if you only go the same old round again and again you will miss half the interest of the neighbourhood. The map will show you perhaps that in one direction there are low rocky hills, in another an open wide river bed, two miles off is a large *jheel*; a reserved forest and open cultivation fill in the other areas. Each of these terrains will hold certain special species in addition to the generally adapted forms which are capable of flourishing in all the types of terrain. It is important therefore to establish for each camp (1) which species are able to flourish throughout the area (2) which species only inhabit certain parts of the area. You are then in a position to start to establish the biological factors which are responsible for the differences of distribution. Everyone knows for instance why the Snipe will only be found along the margin of the *jheel* but there are innumerable similar factors which regulate the distribution of other forms—food, cover, special adaptations, breeding requirements, etc. etc. Each type of terrain requires to be worked until you are satisfied that you know all about its inhabitants. Watching and thought are of as much importance as killing. I propose in my next letter to give you suggestions as to the points to consider, species by species. Here I am only generalizing, so I will not say more about this study of terrain than to give the larks as an example. Round your camp in a five mile radius you will perhaps find 4 forms of Lark irregularly distributed. Now there must be an explanation behind the irregularity of their distribution. Its ultimate basis is

probably food, but food will express itself in external form—one lark may be confined to black cotton soil: another may need open ground under *sal* trees: a third may only be patchy because from some ecological reason it is numerically scarce and so there are not enough individuals, and its numbers never increase, to populate the region. We do not therefore want merely on the American model a report:

Mirafra cantillans. Abundant. 75 specimens Camps A B C D
Mirafra assamica. Very rare. 1 specimen Camp B
Alauda arvensis. 21 specimens Camps A & B

We want some hint of the factors which induced their comparative abundance and their difference in distribution. That is what should lie behind ornithology—the specimens and the correct name should only be means to an end.

I realize of course that in the time at your disposal you will not be able to settle all these points, but we want *your* ideas and *your* observation both as a contribution to the problems and as a stimulus to workers in other areas who can then proceed to corroborate or disprove your suggestions.

All the time ask yourself the question WHY. Why is the distribution patchy? Why is the bird in the sandy dry river bed and not in the cultivated plain alongside? Why is it in the roadside avenue and not in the forest? And why has it special modification? Any bird with special modification, the scimitar-bill of *Pomatorhinus*, the racket-tail of *Dissemurus*, the heavy beak of *Pyrrhuloxia*, must inspire you with a desire to see why it has the modifications which separate it from others of its family. All such points will occur to you naturally as the survey progresses.

Let your notebook be just as important as your gun. I should recommend you to keep several notebooks. First of all you should have a large general diary to be kept day by day after the lines of those kept by Hume in his Sind trip (Vol. I *Stray Feathers*) and Scully in his trip to Eastern Turkestan (Vol. IV *Stray Feathers*). This will describe the localities, terrain, chief forms met, with special points of interest. At the end of the Survey it can then easily be polished up as an introduction to the Survey report.

Then I personally keep another notebook under species heading. This I run through daily noting each date and place where each species is met with and all points of interest. Each new species is given a space and heading as it occurs. Running through the pages daily serves to ensure that nothing is forgotten. It also gives one the distribution clearly. It was annoying often in the E. Ghats survey to have nothing to show whether common birds did or did not occur at a camp—the absence of skins often probably really meant that the bird was not collected as sufficient had been obtained at other camps—there was nothing to show whether it did or did not occur. The amount given under these species headings varies of course. The Jungle Babbler for instance gets off with 'May 2–31 Camp Hylakandy common and general in all types of terrain'; whereas with a migrant or irregularly distributed species there are daily records with full details. I have daily records extending over years for the migratory species in the Punjab which show the waxing and waning of their passage periods.

Then I should keep a small notebook for soft parts of specimens. Do not write the colours of soft parts on the labels. With each fresh species obtained start a separate page for it in a notebook: write down very carefully the soft parts of the first specimen with the serial number of the skin. Each fresh specimen would then be compared with that entry, the similarity or the differences being noted under its serial number. This will ensure uniformity of description and then when the skins are worked out we can see if differences in the soft parts are correlated with sex, age and seasonal differences. The usual hackneyed formal writing label by label takes far more time and gives far less value—the specimens are divided up, the results are never correlated, and if the colours given on two labels differ one does not feel sure that the difference is not merely two different days' versions of the same colours. This of course implies that your first act in bringing in the day's specimens is to list them up in your serial register of skins and fit each bird with its serial number before it is skinned. The soft parts should of course be noted as soon as possible. This little register may well go out in your knapsack to the field. Be sure

to include the colours of the inside of the mouth, which are usually quite neglected but often tell one a great deal.

Don't trouble to measure birds in the flesh. It is however of interest to weigh the larger forms.

Your labels should give information on the following points (1) The state of the organs (2) State of skull (3) Fat (4) Moulting.

Regard correct sexing as the most important part of the preparation of the specimen. Henricks will not be able to sex every specimen—shot marks, heat, immaturity, off season, will all make it impossible to sex certain specimens. But it is essential for me to know that when you mark a bird as male you do so because you have had absolute proof *by dissection* that it is a male. Do not guess from the plumage—I can do that, and also the plumages are far less safe a guide than you may realize. Because people have guessed or sexed wrongly for 100 years many facts about the sequence of plumages have been unknown to us. Describe the organs as you find on the label—give a drawing of the size of the testes or of the ovaries where possible. If you are doubtful say so—'organs obscure but apparently ♀'. The more importance you attach to this point the more value I shall be able to extract from the skin in due course. Mark the presence of incubation patches. Say if shot actually *off* a nest—we don't know which sexes incubate the eggs.

With regard to the skull an experienced skinner can say whether a bird is juvenile or adult (within certain limits) from the degree of ossification of the skull. In the juvenile the skull is very soft, hardly more than cartilage—it takes 3 to 4 months to ossify fully. Ossification starts at the base of the skull by the insertion of the vertebral column and also behind the eye—the two areas advancing to meet each other over the brain pan. After the post juvenal moulting there is still a patch of unossified skull showing as a little window in the centre, gradually decreasing till the window fades out. If notes are made in the skulls about ossification—and an experienced skinner soon knows it well—between the breeding season and November (after that it is too late) it gives tremendous help in plumage studies, as incomplete ossification at once betrays the immature bird, whatever the plumage.

Presence of Fat in excessive quantities shows that the bird cannot be breeding and that it is probably on migration. Presence or absence of moulting if noted helps in plumage studies. Details are not necessary.

I should like you to pay a good deal of attention to food, not of course the hackneyed remark 'insects' or 'seeds', but to any special foods which are obviously being favoured by particular species and which may help to explain their distribution. It is advisable to take a good supply of small test tubes and then stomach and crop contents can be preserved in weak spirit for later identification.

Such small test tubes are also useful for preserving small chicks. You should preserve for down studies 1 or 2 chicks of every species of which nests are found—regard chicks as more value than eggs. Downy nidifugous chicks and larger nidicolous species (e.g. birds of prey & eggs) are better skinned. Be careful to establish the identity of your chicks.

You will say to yourself in reading all this long farrago that there is nothing new in it and that all the directions are obvious. I agree, but my experience is that 9 out of 10 collecting trips and collections lose a huge proportion of their value from a neglect of these obvious details. Carry them out and we shall be able to write a first class report on the birds of Hyderabad State which will be of far more than local interest.'

APPENDIX 2

Ragbag

Of Some Evocative Excerpts from a Few Surviving Letters.
(Remarks within square brackets are mine)

1. Hugh Whistler to SA: 'Battle, 13 September 1938. I am most interested to hear that you are an antiquarian—so am I—on the Committee of our Sussex Archaeological Society of which my grandfather was Vice President. But my interests in this line have to be curbed so that the birds shan't suffer.'
2. Richard Meinertzhagen to SA: 'London 16 December 1938. . . . When you hope Hitler and Mussolini will get what they want, do you mean war? If so, it looks as though your hopes will be gratified at no distant date. I have seldom seen such madness. War is the only remedy for such maniacs. They understand nothing beyond force. But next time there will be a complete dismemberment beyond any risk of recovery. We cannot have these shocks every few years. I do not mind a good shake-up once a century, but every ten years is a nuisance, and it seriously interferes with ornithology and my work. Stresemann was over here this autumn. He's a good fellow but talks more than he should [about Hitler and Nazi politics] and may get into trouble. He disapproves of Hitler but cannot suggest an alternative. The wretched Jews are having a ghastly time and everyone here is doing what they can, but it is very difficult as the German Jews are really most unsavoury people. One loves them and sympathizes with them as long as one does not come into personal contact

with them. They have made themselves a sort of European Untouchables and we now want a European Gandhi to fight for them.' [At the 1954 International Ornithological Congress in Basel I was sharing a room in the University Students' Hostel with my friend the eminent ornithologist Herbert Friedmann—himself a Jew and one of the nicest Americans I know. We got talking about the plight of the German Jews under Hitler during the War, and I remember Friedmann's telling remark 'If the Jews in Germany are all like the Jews in America then I have full sympathy with Hitler'—which was aptly eloquent!]

3. Erwin Stresemann to SA: (After his return from a stay with our mutual friend Col. Meinertzhagen in London in the period between the Munich Appeasement and the outbreak of World War II.) 'Berlin, 1 January 1939. It's the first day of a new and probably fateful year. It is Sunday and the sun shining on snow-covered roofs opposite our little flat on the 4th floor—and let me use this peaceful morning to write you that letter which had constantly been in my mind for one long year since I had Tehmina's and your charming and detailed news about Christmas 1938!! It will be a retrospect on the turbulent active period, full of hopes, achievements and disappointments. Unfortunately I cannot enter into all its details, instructive as it would be to you, but I don't think it would add much to the picture you made yourself already [Of Hitler, the Nazis and Jew-baiting] After the Rouen International Ornithological Congress I followed an invitation of Col. Meinertzhagen to be his guest in London together with my sister (the mother of Helmut Bayer) and we spent there a delightful fortnight, devoted to some work at the British Museum but even more so to simply enjoying life in a very pleasant surrounding. . . . If you visit the deserts of India you will surely collect ground-living birds together with soil, proofs *a la* Meinertzhagen to show adaptation of the colour of the birds (especially the larks) to environment. This scheme worked very well in SW Africa where I had suggested it to Dr Niethammer. Always be on the lookout

- for differently coloured ground—red, black etc. Think of the Crested Larks in the Nile Valley. . . . I think I haven't expressed yet my thanks to you for having so very kindly added—through Mr Whistler's intervention—to our Indian stuff by presenting us with an additional lot of very welcome, and in part even very rare, birds from Travancore. I certainly did appreciate it with great gratitude. What excellent labelling!
4. Hugh Whistler to SA: 'Battle, 6 April 1939. Confound Hitler. I had arranged to go to East Poland again towards the end of the month. Now I daren't leave England in case of a war. Life is short and that damnable maniac is keeping the whole world in turmoil just for his own personal ambition of being a conqueror surpassing Alexander and Napoleon and all the rest of them. If ever there was a case for political assassination!—one can't help feeling—one life might save millions. The idea is that if we get through April the danger is over temporarily until after the harvest—and then I suppose he will stop me from going to Algeria. What a world!'
 5. Hugh Whistler to SA (at news of Tehmina's death on 9 July 1939): 'Battle, 3 August 1939. The break in our correspondence made me wonder uneasily if anything was wrong and today your sad letter of 26 July has brought me your tragic news. I can't tell you how sorry I am for you and how full of sympathy I feel. It had not been my privilege and pleasure actually to meet your wife but it was impossible to have a constant correspondence with you over many years without realising that you were a very very devoted couple and that she was one of those rare companions with which few men are blessed and helped. I can therefore have some slight idea of the desolation and heartbreak that is now yours, and how difficult you find it to believe in the inscrutable designs of Providence. No words of mine can help you. You have got to suffer and win through alone, and you will win through because you know that that is what she would wish. But while you fight your fight, get what tiny help and crumbs of consolation

- you may in the knowledge that your friends are feeling and sympathising for you. I am so very very sorry. All kindest regards.'
6. Hugh Whistler to SA: 'Battle, 20 September 1939. My own feeling is that it will not be a long war, and if I am stuck here the arrival of parcels [of survey bird skins] to work at will be a perfect godsend. You don't know the joy of the sight of a parcel of Indian birds waiting on the table—with its thrills all unknown!'
 7. Hugh Whistler to SA: (In preparation for the Mysore Survey) 'Battle, 26 September 1939. Herewith a list of birds which you might meet in Mysore State, and what I should like from the systematic point of view. The field notes *you* must pay attention to—our preparation of the new handbook has shown up what little information there is about the field notes of most species, even quite common birds. As a general matter I very much want the distribution inland of species peculiar to the Eastern and Western Ghats. You will also need to work out the Wet and Dry zones in the State. Betts's Coorg notes showed how very local these may be.'
 8. Hugh Whistler to S.H. Prater: (Curator BNHS, remarking about the Mysore Survey) 'Battle, 5 February 1940. We really are beginning to get the distribution of Indian birds worked out at last—and this is largely due to your enthusiasm and "push" in getting all these surveys done! Ornithologists have need to be grateful to you.'
 9. Hugh Whistler to SA: (Regarding some Mysore Survey skins I had asked him to send to Stresemann as a gift from me) 'Battle, 26 April 1940. About a dozen were marked for Stresemann but of course it is impossible to send them to him [the War was on]—he must just content himself with the rape of the collections in Warsaw which has been reported in the press!'
 10. Hugh Whistler to SA: (In response to a political harangue) 'Battle, 29 August 1941. This much is certain. There is both right and wrong in both the Indian and the English points of view, and both sides would be the better for

- appreciating a little more of the opposite point of view. So I will leave it at that and I can only hope that however much you hate and loathe the English you can still feel friendly towards an ornithologist H.W. in spite of his belonging to the hated race. I for my part feel that I have a good friend in Salim Ali who is a very fine ornithologist: to him my kindest regards.'
11. Hugh Whistler to SA: (After Ticehurst's death) 'Battle 5 October 1941. It is a pity that yours and his relations were not very cordial. However, it is too late to repine now. . . . I have been getting all the soil samples out and wedded to their respective larks, and it seems to be working out in a most interesting manner. With some species such as *Lullula* [Black Lark] there is clearly no connection between colour of the lark and colour of the soil. With others—*Calandrella*, *Ammomanes*, *Galerida*—there appears to be a very close connection: *Galerida theklae* [of the Nile Valley etc.] for instance. I have now collected six races with their soils, from the black-looking bird of Portugal to the bright red bird of the Sahara—each race very accurately reflects the colour of its soil.'
 12. E.H.N. Lowther to SA: 'Allahabad, 2 August 1942 [a week before the passing of the Quit India Resolution by the Indian National Congress]. In your letter of 7 April you *almost* became political in your views! I was sorry Sir Stafford Cripps failed in his mission, and though I love India and have many very dear friends, I don't think Gandhi's attitude to the Europeans is ever going to settle a very difficult question. First there *must* be understanding between Hindus and Muslims, and between all classes and Europeans. This latter will I believe never come about until Indians and Europeans marry, freely inter-marry, among the better classes. There must be an understanding on both sides. It means an entirely new approach to the question, but take it from me, the colour bar *has to go*—it will be one of the things that will go when we have peace again. And why shouldn't it? What right has the European to think he is a better man than an Indian? He isn't and he

knows it. And he will have to give up thinking of the children of a mixed marriage as "little black bastards" as he so often does now.'

13. Honourable (Mrs) Joan Whistler to SA: 'Battle, 9 August 1943 [in response to my condolence on HW's death on 7 July 1943 of cancer]. I should like to tell you what a very very high opinion Hugh had of you and all your knowledge, and how much he too appreciated your friendship—and how much pleasure all your wonderful letters gave to him. He was so pleased with your book [*The Book of Indian Birds*] and the very kind way you talked of him in the Preface. I know there was no feeling of competition or rivalry ever between you—nothing to spoil your friendship, and therefore I am just going to ask your advice [about revising HW's *Popular Handbook of Indian Birds* for the fourth edition which was published in 1949. HW's bird collection, including H.W. Waite's, consisting of some 26,000 skins, together with all his meticulous bird notes, are now in the British Museum (Natural History)].
14. In 1968, while I was temporarily away from Bombay on field work, a letter of condolence came to the Society from a friendly Russian fellow-ornithologist Dr A.I. Ivanov of the Zoological Institute, Leningrad, on 'the sad demise of my dear friend Salim Ali', reported to him by an Indian visitor—one Prof. Singh (?) of Osmania University. The letter was replete with exaggerated eulogy of virtues such as are usually discovered only post mortem! Few men are given the satisfaction of realizing in their lifetime how excellent and indispensable they were, and I happened to be one of the lucky ones, not once but in two separate resurrections. I was shown Dr Ivanov's letter on my return to Bombay and lost no time in convincing him that he was grossly misinformed.
- (a) Dr Ivanov to SA: 'Leningrad, 9 July 1968. I cannot express how glad I was when I read your letter that the information I had was absolutely wrong! According to Russian omen [*sic*] you have to live now as long as possible for a human being. My friends were very glad to learn the good news.'

All went well while I was fulfilling the Russian omen, and up to August 1974 when both the International Ornithological Congress and the International Council for Bird Preservation were held in Canberra (Australia), which I had expected to but could not attend.

- (b) Guy Mountfort, President of the British Ornithologists' Union to 'Mrs Salim Ali' [who had died in 1939]. 'Black-boys, Sussex, 21 August 1974. The news of your husband's death [origin a mystery!] was announced at the International Ornithological Congress in Canberra last week, and caused great consternation. He was one of the world's most famous and distinguished ornithologists, and his passing will sadden his many friends throughout the civilized world. I had the privilege of knowing him for nearly forty years. On behalf of the Members and Council of the British Ornithologists' Union I send you our deepest condolences. My wife also wishes to join me in expressing our personal sympathy for your sad bereavement.'
- (c) Guy Mountfort to SA: 'Blackboys, Sussex, 4 September 1974. I am more pleased than I can say to receive your cheerful letter informing me that the announcement at the I.O.C. of your death was, as you say, "somewhat misleading" . . . Every one is going to be delighted. You are, of course, not the first famous man to disprove such a rumour, and I hope you will make good use of it in your autobiography. It even happened to me during the war, when I read my name in the list of casualties!'

Another friend, Dr Yoshimaro Yamashina of Japan, President of the Asian Section of ICBP, had also heard the same grapevine news.

- (d) Dr Yamashina to 'Mrs Salim Ali': 'Tokyo, 11 September 1974. . . . my most sincere condolence for the sad occasion of the bereavement of your beloved husband . . . Ever since I had met your husband for the first time in 1958 at Helsinki, he had been giving me his kind help . . . I had

always been paying great respect to him as my teacher and my father. On 19 August, however, I learnt most distressingly of his sudden demise. At the beginning of the Executive Committee meeting we observed one minute silent prayer for the repose of his soul. We could not, however, in Canberra get any news on when and by what illness he had passed away, which news we all are still waiting to get . . .'

- (e) Dr Yamashina to SA: 'Tokyo, 1 October 1974. Thank you very much for your letter of good news dated 16 September 1974. I do not know how the false news got around, but anyway no news can give me greater joy than your telling me that you are in good health. We have an old saying in Japan [apparently universal]: "He who by mistake is said to have died lives longer." So I am convinced that you will from now on keep fine and active as ever for a long time to come.'
- 15. Erwin Stresemann to SA: 'Berlin, 26 May 1972. This morning Volume 5 of your *magnum opus* arrived, adorned on the first page by your personal dedication which I greatly value. This volume, like its forerunners, is sure to prove of great importance to my further studies. Thank you very very much. We both will be in Tring on July 29, attending the reopening there of the B.M.'s bird collection [moved from South Kensington]. The first time I stayed in this rustic town was in 1910 before I sailed to Bali and the Moluccas, welcomed and trained there by Ernst Hartert [his guru]. Long, long ago!'

* * *

... TO SEE OURSELVES AS OTHERS SEE US

Candid Opinions of an Expedition Leader who Started Off
with Damaging
Reservations and Ended Up as a Valued and Understanding
Friend.

Revealing Excerpts from the Diaries of Colonel
Richard Meinertzhagen, D.S.O.

14th April 1937 Ghorbund Valley, 6500 ft., Afghanistan. 'Pitching camp was a long and tedious business as Sálím is quite useless at anything of that sort and none of the servants knew anything about tents or camping. Sálím is so accustomed to be waited on by an army of servants that he is impotent when he has to do something himself, and yet he advocates that his class is capable of governing India. They must first learn to govern themselves.'

15.4.1937 'I'm not enjoying this at all. I find Sálím trying. He is inefficient and cannot bear being told how to do anything and must always do everything in his own way, which is often wrong. His ignorance of camp life and his helplessness in camp are pathetic. He tells me he has never had to fend for himself in camp and has always had masses of servants before. The pleasure of camp life so much depends on ones companions.'

30.4.1937 'I am disappointed in Sálím. He is quite useless at anything but collecting. He cannot skin a bird, nor cook, nor do anything connected with camp life, packing up or chopping wood. He writes interminable notes about something—perhaps me. . . . Even collecting he never does on his own initiative. Like all Indians he is incredibly incompetent at anything he does; if there is a wrong way of doing things he will do it, and he is quite incapable of thinking ahead.'

20.5.1937 'Sálím is the personification of the educated Indian and interests me a great deal. He is excellent at his own theoretical subjects, but has no practical ability, and at everyday little problems is hopelessly inefficient, yet he is quite sure he is right in every case. His views are astounding. He is prepared to turn

the British out of India tomorrow and govern the country himself. I have repeatedly told him that the British Government have no intention of handing over millions of uneducated Indians to the mercy of such men as Sálím: that no Englishman would tolerate men being governed by rats.'

9 Jan. 1952 Sikkim (post-Independence). 'I find Sálím very touchy about India and Indians. He resents any trace of criticism and is extremely bitter about South Africans' treatment of the Indian question. My experience of Indians both in Kenya and S.Africa is that they introduced disease, dishonesty and sedition.' [Then follow violent views on Gandhi, 'the rat Gandhi', and present conditions in India of inefficiency, dishonesty and squalor, as compared with under British rule!]

Glossary

<i>adivāsi</i>	tribal forest dweller
<i>ahimsa</i>	non-violence
<i>almirah</i>	cupboard; cabinet
<i>Ameer</i>	Muslim ruler; nawab
<i>anna</i>	1/16 of the old rupee; about 6 paise
<i>ashram</i>	seminary
<i>askari</i>	African soldier or policeman
<i>ātā</i>	flour of wheat etc.
<i>avatar</i>	incarnation (of a deity)
<i>bābūl</i>	a thorny tree, <i>Acacia nilotica</i>
<i>bāndobāst</i>	management; organization
<i>bāra</i>	big
<i>bāzār</i>	market
<i>bēgār</i>	forced labour
<i>bēr</i>	drupe or plant of <i>Zizyphus</i> species
<i>bhēlpūri</i>	an Indian snack
<i>brāhmachāri</i>	initiate (celibate) monk
<i>chāpāti</i>	unleavened bread
<i>chāplīs</i>	sandals
<i>chāprāsi</i>	peon
<i>chārpāi</i>	rude bedstead
<i>chauri</i>	travellers' rest shed
<i>chawls</i>	single-room tenement buildings
<i>chēla</i>	disciple
<i>chewda</i>	snack made of dried rice, gram, peanuts, etc., fried together
<i>chhota</i>	small

choola
chowkidār
dak bungalow
dāl
dārgāh
dārshān
dāstār
dewān

dhārāmsāla
dhoti

durries
fākīr
fātwā

gāddi
gāthiā
Ghana

ghee
gompa
gūr
halāl

hubshi
Hūr
idles
imli
intekhab
izār
jāgirdār
jāri-pūrana
jātris

stove
 watchman; sentry
 rest-house for travellers
 lentils
 shrine
 audience
 regal headgear
 chief minister or finance minister
 of Princely State
 travellers' dormitory
 loose (wrapped) Indian nether
 garment
 floor rugs (woven)
 mendicant
 diktat; authoritative pronounce-
 ment
 throne
 dry eatable made from gram flour
 literally: dense forest. Applied to
 Bharatpur wetland (bird sanctu-
 ary)
 clarified butter
 Buddhist monastery
 jaggery
 lawful; usually throat-cutting of
 animals by Muslims for consump-
 tion
 Abyssinian
 a once rebellious tribe of Sind
 leavened rice cakes (south Indian)
 tamarind (*Tamarindus indica*)
 anthology
 loose pyjama
 owner of government-gifted land
 discarded worthless junk
 pilgrims

<i>jheel</i>	shallow lake
<i>jhoom</i>	shifting cultivation
<i>jongpen</i>	Tibetan governor of province
<i>jowār</i>	Sorghum
<i>kāfir</i>	non-believer
<i>kāndi</i>	a tree, <i>Prosopis spicigera</i>
<i>kārwanda</i>	a species of berry, <i>Carissa carandas</i>
<i>khābār</i>	information; news
<i>khāchār</i>	a type of 'passenger' bullock cart
<i>khādi</i>	homespun cloth
<i>khāki</i>	yellowish brown colour, as of army field uniforms
<i>khālāsi</i>	tent crew
<i>Khān Bāhādūr</i>	a British-Indian honorific title, usually for Muslims
<i>khārāb ādmi</i>	literally 'bad man'; dacoit
<i>khud</i>	ditch
<i>koita</i>	a heavy curved knife
<i>kūrta</i>	long shirt
<i>kutchā</i>	raw; rough, unmetalled (road)
<i>kūtia</i>	hut
<i>Laibon</i>	African tribal chief
<i>lota</i>	water jug, usually with spout
<i>māchān</i>	platform, usually on a tree
<i>maidān</i>	open field
<i>māli</i>	gardener
<i>māndi</i>	market
<i>māni</i>	gem
<i>māsāla</i>	condiment
<i>maund</i>	measure of weight, c. 40 kgs
<i>mehmāndār</i>	'guest keeper'; host
<i>misri</i>	crystallized sugar
<i>mofussil</i>	up-country (non urban)
<i>mugger</i>	crocodile
<i>muntāzim</i>	manager; warden

mūrghi
mushaira

nālā
nāllāmāddi
nāmāz
nāwāb
Nāwāb Hār Dām
Shikār Jung
nizām
pārād
pārikrāma
patel
peenēka pāni
puggee
pukka
pulao
purdah
Rai Bahadur

Raj

raja
Rāshtrapati Bhavan

sādhu
sāhib
sāmpān
sārdār
sārdārji
sāri
satyagraha

sāyā
seer
shāmiāna
Shāriāt

fowl (chicken)
meeting where poets recite their poems
watercourse; ravine
a tree, <i>Terminalia tomentosa</i>
formal Muslim prayer
Muslim ruler or nobleman
mock title for a 'chronic' shikari
former ruler of Hyderabad State
tribal community hunt
circumambulation
village head in Gujarat
drinking water
tracker
opposite of <i>kutchā</i> , q.v.
a gourmet rice dish
curtain; drapes; also, veil
British-Indian honorific title, usually for Hindus
usually applied to the old British-Indian government
ruler
The residence of the President of India
a mendicant
a title of respect
a type of canoe
chief; headman; leader
an honorific title applied to Sikhs
Indian woman's dress
'soul force'; passive non-cooperation with authority
robe
a measure of weight, c. 1/40 maund
a marquee-like tent or shelter
Muslim law

shikārgāh
shikāri
shikwa
shōla

sola topee

sooar ka bacha
Sufi
supari
suttoo
Swadeshi

swāmi
tāhsildār
tākli
tālūka
tālūqdār
tāttoo
taungya
tikka gharry
tsampa
vakil
Yuvraj
zāmindār
Zērbādi

game reserve
 hunter
 plaint
 a forest formation in south-Indian hills
 a pith or cork sun hat, fashionable in British-Indian days
 literally: 'son of a pig'
 a Muslim sect
 betel nut
 roasted gram flour
 indigenous; also, movement to boycott goods of foreign manufacture
 holy man
 a petty revenue official
 a yarn spinning spindle
 a division of district
 see *jāgirdār*, q.v.
 shifting cultivation; *jhoom*, q.v.
 a small pony
 a horse carriage for hire
suttoo, q.v.
 lawyer
 heir apparent of Indian ruler
 landholder
 Indian Muslim × Burmese cross breed

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